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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

ON

Community Development And Panchayati Raj

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL, RURAL EXTENSION TRS
21 OCT 1963
KRISHNAGIRI RESERVOIR PROJECT

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THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

C.D. 173

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
ON
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND
PANCHAYATI RAJ

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सत्यमेव जयते

Issued on behalf of
MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,
CO-OPERATION AND PANCHAYATI RAJ
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

February 1963, Magha 1884

"I think nothing has happened in any country in the world during the last few years so big in content and so revolutionary in design as the Community Projects in India. They are changing the face of rural India.

"....They have created a sensation outside India. And do not forget, they are entirely an Indian growth."

—*Jawaharlal Nehru*

NOT FOR SALE

Published by the Director, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Delhi, and Printed by the Manager, Government of India Press, Faridabad.

C.D. 173

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A WORD OF EXPLANATION

Five short years ago Shri Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister of India and as Chairman of the Central Committee for Community Development consecrated the programme of Community Development to the Nation. Community Development, as it has grown on the soil of India since, is a restatement in practice of the old concept "Live and let live" which is as ancient as man himself. The programme has grown in depth and width, far beyond all original calculations. It has acquired a significance, not merely for India but also for scores of other countries struggling likewise for light out of the darkness of poverty, ignorance and disease in which we grope today. The interest aroused on the wider horizon imposes on the workers engaged in this programme a still greater burden of responsibility for the task that lies ahead.

Community Development in India is growing in concept according to the genius of our own people, supported by such other kindred experiences as are available for assimilation from abroad. The main spark of the movement was kindled by the Prime Minister when he inaugurated the first Conference of Development Commissioners in May 1952. Those who attended the Conference or heard him face to face on other occasions have taken the charge according to their capacities. The success of the programme thus far has been to the extent that the original charge has travelled without serious attenuation during transit. With the programme expanding as it is, the stage has arrived to think seriously of how to charge those who carry the torch along the wide line of communications in distant and obscure outposts. Dwarfs that we are, we do not appear strong enough to transmit the spark to remote

posts without the spark undergoing serious mutations en route.

The idea of compiling the messages of the Prime Minister, scattered as these have been, has come as a welcome innovation. The compilation is presented strictly in the words of the Prime Minister as they were uttered so as to reach the tens of thousands of our workers and the millions of our fellow-countrymen who have not had the opportunity of sharing with the Prime Minister that 'spirit of adventure' which one ought to feel as co-sharers in the joint stock enterprise of 'India Limited'. May the light spread till it illumines all the dark crevices we have within and without !

MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
NEW DELHI
April 20, 1957

S. K. DEY

1. MAN: THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE

It all depends on how you and I and all of us approach the question. Is it just another of our many schemes—good schemes, no doubt—in which we shall do our day's work and leave the rest to chance or is it something more than that? Is it something which you will direct from above as an administrator, as a Development Commissioner, as a Central Committee or as the Planning Commission and so on, or is it something which will enable you to unleash forces from below among our people to do the work? Forces unleashed without definite aims and without proper co-ordination sometimes yield good results and sometimes bad. A good lead and a good organisation from the top is obviously necessary and essential yet it may be completely useless unless the forces from below are released.

Somtimes, I begin to suspect and become a little afraid of these leads from the top that we, including myself, are always giving. We have got into the habit of doling out good advice to the country, to our people, to everybody. Nevertheless, my own experience has shown that people who give too much advice are unpopular. They are irritating. At any rate, such advice does not conduce to the good of others, as it is intended to. That is to say, if we act too much from the top without adequate foundations and without that intimate relation with the lower rungs, we can hardly achieve any great results. We will achieve something, of course. So the problem becomes one of how to bring about a union of these two elements.

Obviously, it is necessary to plan, to direct, to organise and to co-ordinate; but it is even more necessary to create

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Inaugural speech at the Development Commissioners' Conference, Delhi, May 7, 1952.

conditions in which a spontaneous growth from below is possible. I wonder if this Community Development Scheme is something which is likely to bring about a union between the top and the others. By the term top, I do not mean that some people are superior; I mean those who guide, the organisers; and by others I mean the millions who will participate in the work. In fact, ultimately there should be no top and no gradations. Nevertheless, I feel that even the organisational lead should not be tossed like a ball from what is the top to what might, if you like, be called the bottom; that is to say, even the initiative for the Community Projects should come, wherever possible, from the people who are most affected by them.

Often, we like to sit in our chambers and decide everything according to what we consider to be good for the people. I think the people themselves should be given the opportunity to think about it and thus they will affect our thinking as we affect their thinking. In this way, something much more living and integrated is produced, something in which there is a sense of intimate partnership—intimate partnership not in the doing of the job but in the making of the job and the thinking of the job. Those of us or those of you who are more trained, who have given more thought to the problem and might be considered, to some extent, especially suited to that kind of work are better qualified for thinking and giving the lead than you or I; at the same time, it is equally true that unless those, who may not be specialists but for whom you are working and who ultimately are supposed to work for themselves, feel that mental urge, that impact of the creative spirit within them to think and act, they will not work in the way that we all want them to work.

I do consider that the scheme of Community Projects is something of very great importance and it is so not merely because you can sum up and write down on paper the material achievements of such a project, which I hope will be considerable—all the additional food grown, the houses

built, schools and dispensaries, better roads, tanks, wells and so on. You can make a list of them and it is pleasing to see that list but somehow my mind goes beyond to the man, woman and child. The house may be good but it is the builder of the house that counts ultimately, not the house or even the occupant of the house. Therefore, it is to the builder that my mind goes; we want to make the people of India all builders. These Community Projects appear to me to be something of vital importance, not only in the material achievements that they would bring about but much more so because they seek to build up the community and the individual and to make the latter a builder of his own village centre and of India in the larger sense.

Now, how are you going to proceed? Naturally, not by vague talk and discussion. One cannot have those plans without a very great deal of careful discussion and I am glad to say that there has been a good deal of these discussions in the last two or three months and they have borne some fruit already. Yet a slight fear seizes me when I see all this planning and organisation that, perhaps, we might begin to think that this is the major part of our work. We might begin to think, as many of us are apt to do, that, sitting in big buildings and big offices, it is we who are doing the job. We are doing nothing of the kind. We are only indicating how the job is to be done; it is the others who will have to do it. But, somehow, as things are, the persons who do the job are rather diffident. How to give the initiative to the people in these things? How to invest them with that sense of partnership, that sense of purpose, that eagerness to do things?

Looking into my own mind and trying to revive old memories, I remember how at some periods of our existence, individual and national, we did think that way, we did feel that way and act that way. It is this sense which adds to one's stature. Although that kind of thing has happened in this country, whether anything similar can happen again in our life time, I do not know. We may not achieve our former standard because conditions are differ-

ent. Anyhow, I am of a generation that belongs more or less to the past and cannot, therefore, speak for others—the younger generation, who ought to feel as we did. Whether we feel that way or not, it seems to me quite obvious that if the tremendous task of re-building India is undertaken, it will have to be undertaken with something much more than the books and statistics, papers and directions and planning and organisation that we may put into it. It will have to be undertaken with something fiery and with the spirit that moves a nation to high endeavour. Well, can the Community Projects be looked at that way? Perhaps, I am putting it too high and it is dangerous to put a thing too high, because if you do so you are liable to react the other way.

I suppose there is hardly a country—and I mean no disrespect to other countries—which has such high ideals as India. And I may add that there is hardly a country where the gap between ideals and performance is so big as in India. So it is a dangerous thing to talk big and then not be able to come anywhere near your objective. Nevertheless, occasionally one has even to gaze at the stars even though one may not reach them. Merely to lower your ideals because you think they are too high is not right, even though you might not quite achieve those ideals. How far can we take the Community Projects out of the setting of your offices and make them a scheme for living men and women inspired by something worthwhile to do? That is the problem. We measure and calculate rightly and inevitably about the finances and the resources involved; one has got to do it, one cannot act irresponsibly. However, if I may say so, all these are secondary matters. The primary matter is the human being involved, the man who is going to work, the man who is going to feel it and translate that feeling into action. Are you going to try to create that type of human being? The human being is there, of course: you have only to reach his heart and mind. You can do that but only by doling out advice. Take it from me, do not advise too much: do the job yourself.

That is the only advice you can give to others. Do it and others will follow. Why do you think, it is your business to sit in a big office and issue orders because you are the Development Commissioner? If I may say so with all respect, you are no good if you do that. Better go somewhere else and do some other job. Let us be clear about this.

Whether it is the Development Commissioner or the Administrator, he must not sit in his office and issue decrees all the time. He must take the spade and dig or do something else. No man connected with the scheme, who merely sits in his office, is good enough, as far as I am concerned. If you work, you will make others work. That is the only way of giving a lead and calling upon others to work. We are becoming a lazy people, especially with our hands and feet and often enough intellectually lazy, too. I regret to say, although it has nothing to do with our present work here, that our university standards are going down and, if this is not checked, I do not know how we are to make good in anything big later. However, that is another matter.

Wherever you are, I expect that you should begin your work every morning with a little manual effort, if possible, in furtherance of the Community Projects. You must develop a sense of partnership.

I do not know what our Development Commissioner or the Administrator has done thus far in regard to the production of leaflets, pamphlets, etc., explaining the schemes. I have seen a pamphlet here. It is in English. It is rather businesslike and good. I hope that such pamphlets will be issued in the various languages of India. But much more is required. I want this matter to be explained, not in this businesslike way but in a more human way, so that somehow it may catch the imagination of the people concerned. But what is more necessary is that you, the Development Commissioners, should function in a human way with the people, should talk to them in a friendly way,

get to know what they want and explain to them what you propose to do, how it is their work, how it is not something imposed upon them and not even something that is a gift from above. You should explain to them that it is going to be a project of co-operative endeavour, how they will benefit by it and then their children and their children's children. See that you get to know them somehow, reach their minds and hearts and invite them to wok with you; not under your command but with you, so that you gradually form some kind of brotherhood a fraternity of workers.

I speak, naturally, with some knowledge of my people. I am not afraid of criticising my people. I have just called them lazy and all that. And yet I do believe quite honestly that the human material we have in India is very fine and, given the opportunity, it can achieve big things. How to give an opportunity to this vast mass of human material—that is the problem. You cannot suddenly give it to all, however much you may plan for it. Of course, you must plan for everybody. No planning which is not for all is good enough. You must always have that view before you and you must prepare the foundations for the next step towards the final goal. And so, you ultimately start a process which grows by itself. Suppose you take fifty-five Community Projects today; you plan next year to take another hundred or whatever the number and so on. You want the number to grow so that in the course of five or six years you may have from 500 to 600 or more centres.

That itself is a tremendous thing covering, as it possibly will, a very large proportion of our population. But I was thinking of something slightly different. Take a centre in one place comprising about a hundred villages; what you do there in a concentrated way will percolate through to the surrounding villages. If the work is too officialised, this will not happen. It will never spread beyond your immediate vision. It must not become something too rigid but be something which has an element of spontaneous

growth within it. And that can only happen when you catch the imagination of the people. Then it grows automatically. There is always a danger—I am myself guilty of it often enough—that by direction and authority we may make a thing rigid, not flexible, making it a part of the official hierarchy. Now, official hierarchies are, I suppose necessary. But with all the good they do, they have a certain deadening influence on anything that is spontaneous or vital. The Community Projects will never grow if they are approached in that way. You must always think of the element of spontaneity.

This kind of project will succeed or fail in the measure that you achieve results within stated periods. There is, of course, a certain amount of vagueness when you approach the people but there must be precision about one thing : about the time in which a thing must be done. That target must be continually before you. And if you do not reach it, well, you fail to that extent.

Really, what we are committed to is not a few community centres but to working for the biggest community of all and that is the community of the people of India, more especially those who are down and out, those who are backward. There are far too many backward people in this country. Besides the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes organisations, there is an organisation called the Backward Classes League. As a matter of fact, you can safely say that 96 per cent of the people of India are backward. There are far too many backward people handful of men, most of the people are backward. Anyhow, we have to think more of those who are more backward because we must aim at progressively producing a measure of equality in opportunity and other things. In the modern world today, you cannot go on for long having big gaps between those who are at the top and those who are at the bottom. You cannot make all men equal, of course. But we must at least give them equality of opportunity. So, I hope that these community centres will not merely pick

out the best and most favourable spots and help them develop but also try to work out the problems of the other spots which are backward economically, socially and in other respects and thus gain a wealth of experience of various types and conditions in India, so that this tremendous problem of backwardness may be tackled in the best and quickest way possible.

2. THE SEED THAT IS SPROUTING INTO A PLANT

Young men, you have come to Nilokheri from all parts of India. I am addressing a few words to you from Delhi. It was my desire to be with you and talk to you individually but I could not do so. I am speaking to you from here.

The great work which we are going to take in hand is of tremendous importance for the country. What is this great work for which all of you, selected by various States, have been asked to come here ? A special responsibility is cast on those who are selected for a big task. You might have been given details and briefs about this work, which forms part of a big plan. There is a great idea behind this plan because through it we are going to sow a new seed. This seed will sprout into a plant which, in turn, will grow into a mighty tree to give shade to all the people of this country.

Ours is a big country. It is both an advantage and a disadvantage. It is an advantage because big things can be done only by big countries; and a disadvantage because it is not easy to handle a large population and direct its energies into one channel. We shall hardly be able to undertake this work till we have understood all these essential facts.

Translation of talk in Hindi broadcast at the inauguration of Project Officers' Training Camp at Nilokheri.

We have to remove poverty and ameliorate the lot of the people of our country. Our objective is not the prosperity of only a section of the people. We have to see how 36 crores of people can progress. No such thing can be accomplished through legislation. Nothing would be gained if our Parliament were to enact a law that the country should go forward and that work should be provided to every able-bodied person. Law can, at best, clear the way, but the work has to be done by the people. To enable them to do so we have to enthuse them and kindle a fire within their hearts. We must place before them a complete picture of the future which may guide and inspire them.

There are a number of requisites for such undertakings. Capital is one of them. There are some rich countries in the world, but ours is a poor country. In fact, India is not poor, because the real wealth of a nation is its people. After all, it is they who produce wealth.

Under the plan on which you are going to work, I am told 55 project areas have been selected. This is only the beginning of the Community Development programme. Possibly we may have 400 or 500 of similar centres in time to come. It is work of unprecedented magnitude. You are going to be partners in it, and in the end all the 36 crores of Indians will join you.

You have come to Nilokheri to receive training. Remember that you have to learn a good deal from the villagers. Many social workers go to the countryside, deliver lectures and come back home. They imagine that they have done a good bit of work, but actually that kind of thing is of no value. Wherever you go, you have to learn something from the people whom you meet. No doubt, you have to be their guide, but you have to learn as much from them as you may be anxious to teach them.

There is a peculiar notion current in our country that it is undignified to do manual labour and that this kind of work belongs to the lower castes. We consider all people to be equal and we want to ensure equality of opportunity

to all. Nor do we look upon any useful work as low. In countries like Russia, China, America and England, whatever be their policy or political ideology, dignity of labour is fully recognised. I feel that one who does not work with his own hand and does not think such work as dignified is a mere idler, whatever may be his other achievements. It is my honest opinion that every Indian student, whether he be at school or college, must do sufficient amount of manual labour, in fields or in factories.

The seed which we are sowing today will sprout before long and become a plant. A great responsibility therefore rests on you as first sowers. This consists in learning and working with enthusiasm, because then alone will you be able to put in your best. About 32 years ago a great movement was started in this country. Mahatma Gandhi was its precursor and guiding light. He put his plan before the country and crores of people became his followers. Gandhiji was a great man; we are small people, but when small people undertake big tasks they too become somewhat big. It will be a mistake to imagine that big tasks are done only by high officers and that your own work is not so important. I feel that at the moment no other work in India is as great as the one you are going to begin. Your work is going to be an ordeal and such of you as will be found wanting may have to be sent back.

I hope you will bear all these things in mind and feel that it is a really big undertaking that has been entrusted to you. We have to mould human material. The people of this country are good, but in certain respects they are backward and appear to be somewhat frustrated. They are not quite conscious of the strength which co-operation gives. We have among us advocates of all manner of policies and ideologies. We are quite fond of debates and heated discussions. At times debating is not a bad thing, but work too has to be done by the people. No country can carry on by mere discussions and paper plans.

I am glad that there are also some women among you.

The nature of this work is such that it will have to be undertaken by all, men and women, boys and girls. I send you my best wishes. Although I could not come myself, I am sending you this message. You may start your work, looking forward to success. Your report will be put up to me, and I shall go through it. My mind is in the work which you are doing and I shall watch its progress with great interest.

3. WANTED A DYNAMIC LEAD

You have completed about four weeks of training in Nilokheri. The period was, no doubt, short, but if it had been usefully spent, it could be considered fruitful. The point for you to consider is what effect the camp has had on you.

You must also search your hearts to find out whether you are going back to your States with the feeling of a crusader or a missionary. The official way of doing things is the very reverse of what a missionary spirit would inspire, for, the official approach, in spite of certain virtues of its own, has a deadening effect. Its set routine is not particularly suitable when something new has to be done in a new way. In such cases the virtues of an official approach, working according to a set pattern, become its very short-coming.

Our development plans look very well on paper but one never knows how they would work in practice. In India, there is so much difference between theory and practice that, while ideals soar high, execution is meagre. We are first-rate so far as theory is concerned, but in practice, very often, we are much lower than in other countries, which have lower ideals than ourselves. People

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Observations on meeting the first batch of Project Officers at the conclusion of their training in August 1952

are apt to worship Mahatma Gandhi, but what is the point in worshipping him when we are not acting according to his teachings and his philosophy ? There should be no gap between theory and practice.

Thirty years ago, it was possible for one man to bring out that 'elemental force' from the Indian people, which ultimately brought a foreign Government to its knees. We cannot, however, live in the past. The question now is how to regenerate that 'elemental force' and the urge to do things. It is not a matter for the Planning Commission to do. No planning body can harness the resources of this tremendous human potential.

In Mahatma Gandhi, there was that magnetic personality which moved the masses in a big way and achieved something big. That sort of thing does not happen every day. But, if we could draw out even a small fraction of this 'elemental force', it could work wonders.

The analogy with India's struggle for freedom in the past and the constructive activity which is now being undertaken by the Government, however, is not complete, as Gandhiji's movement was directed towards bringing down a foreign Government, while in the Community Projects, the work to be done is entirely constructive and therefore, it is in a way more difficult. But in this business of building up a nation there is a tremendous drama.

I felt proud to see a fine band of Indian engineers doing extremely good work at the Damodar Valley. But I was sorry to find that thousands of workers who were participating in that big scheme of nation-building did not know what they were doing and did not have any idea of the big work in which they were participating. I called these workers and explained to them the objects of the D.V.C. how it would bring millions of acres of land under cultivation, prevent destruction by floods, bring electric power to millions of homes and factories and raise the standards of living of the people. The workers were happy that they

were helping a big undertaking—there was a glimmering hope and pride on their faces.

The worker at the lowest rung must be made to feel that he is a partner in the tremendous enterprise of building up his country. He must acquire a sense of glory in the work which he is doing. To generate this feeling among the workers, it is essential that the Project Officers themselves should first imbibe that spirit. You must be charged before you can charge others; you must be dynamic before you can make others dynamic.

This elemental force that has to be drawn out, this vitality which has to be regenerated will, however, be of not much use, unless we know how to do the job. The question of technique thus comes up. There has been, in modern times, a tremendous advance in technology in the West and we must take advantage of this. India went down before the West mainly because of the advance in technology that the West had achieved.

India paid no attention to technology with the result that the development of thought, not on the philosophic side but in the practical technological aspect, was static, crippling, and limited our outlook. This was rather unusual for a people, who in the earlier periods of Indian history, had sailed across the seas, carrying trade as far west as Europe and as far east as Japan, for a people whose philosophy and religion had crossed mountains and seas and ruled the hearts of men and women thousands of miles away.

Progress in the modern age is not possible without adequate knowledge of technology. From the Electrical Age of the first half of this century, the world has now advanced to the Atomic Age and in this age we must be first-rate in technology. We have made some progress in this sphere. Since Independence, a series of National Laboratories have been established, which will rejuvenate the spirit of scientific research and develop what could be called a 'scientific temper'.

While knowledge of technology must be disseminated, in propagating this knowledge the Project Officers must not proceed in any spirit of conceit. Do not make any mistake. The average farmer knows much more than you do, because his knowledge is based on experience. If you want to tell him of some better method, you must approach him in all humility and if you can show him better ways he will surely be grateful and adopt them.

The question, therefore, is to draw the villager towards you by your friendly, sympathetic behaviour, in short, to inspire faith in him. Faith is essential since a cynic, however brilliant, never does anything big because, in spite of his brilliance, he does not have that drive, that energy, that faith which can move mountains.

The 55 Community Projects that have been selected by the Government of India will cover about 17,000 villages. Considering the six lakhs of villages all over India, these 55 projects are relatively small, but if they are successfully implemented, they will affect powerfully the surrounding areas. The idea of Community Project constitutes a seed which will bloom forth into a magnificent tree if the seed takes root.

The projects undertaken by the Central and the State Governments are, no doubt, important, but immediately they do not touch all the people intimately. Direct association of the millions of rural people can only be had if we have a multitude of small schemes in which hundreds of thousands of people could participate. From that point of view the Community Projects scheme is something well thought-out. We want good results and we consider the money spent on Community Projects as an investment, since, after a certain period, it will set in motion something, which on its own will produce dividends. In fact, it will bring about a big change, but a change without conflict.

Wealth cannot be produced by issuing decrees; it will

be produced by labour alone. The problem for India, therefore, is to produce more wealth. In the Community Projects is embodied the idea of peaceful constructive effort, and as such even if it is not fully successful, it will not create that adverse effect which the method of conflict might produce. Secondly, in the Community Development programme, there is something of vast potentiality, ensuring growth from the bottom. That is important as, without understanding this fundamental idea properly, Community Development might be taken into wrong channels.

The idea should be developed on two lines; improvement of the man, and improvement of his technology in small matters. Thirdly, it is most essential to make the villager understand that he will be the maker of his own destiny. He should get rid of that habit of mind which occasionally makes him think that the Government will do everything for him.

We are living in an extremely interesting and fascinating period of world history. We do not want to be mere lookers-on or playthings of others. My mind is a crowded canvas. There is a certain drama about the conception of our country. The country does not represent a mediocrity. It has done, in the past, good things in a big way and it has also done bad things in a big way. We now have a chance in the Community Development programme for doing good things in a big way, and I hope that everyone will rise to the occasion.

There is a certain lack of vitality among our people, particularly among the middle classes. This is a bad portent as the times are fast changing. It might be a platitude to say—but it is none the less correct—that we in India and the world are passing through a big period of transition. We must adjust ourselves to these changing times.

While we utilise science to the best advantage, it is essential that we keep human values in their proper perspective. Science has so much developed nowadays that—

paradoxical though it may appear—the machine has become really human while human beings have become machines. That is not a desirable consummation—human values must win over machines.

4. THIS SACRED WORK

Why have you all gathered here in this hot sun? Today is an auspicious day and we have come here to do sacred work. You have not come to hear me or the President or someone else speak. You have come to shoulder a great task. I should have preferred not to have any speeches on this occasion. We have had far too many of them in our country. I too have delivered numerous speeches. We do not think enough of our work but instead are always ready to offer advice and to find fault. The work we are about to start today is in the service of the Motherland, in the service of the land of which we are all part. We should serve her with hard work, with the sweat of our brow. If necessary, we shall shed our blood, so that millions of our countrymen may go forward and that there may be an end to their trials and tribulations.

Why is this day auspicious? Because it is the Gandhi Jayanti Day. We would like to add further sanctity to this occasion by trying to live up to Mahatmaji's teachings. Gandhiji taught us many lessons, but essentially he taught us to work and to serve. Discussions there are bound to be, and they should be there. Ultimately, however, a country advances only through work and not by idle talk. You people believe in work and there is thus no lesson I can teach you. But it is the others like me, who come from the city, who must learn to work quietly and unobtrusively. Work will speak for itself.

Address at the inauguration of the Community Projects on October 2, 1952. (Translation of the speech in Hindi at Alipur, near Delhi)

The work that we are starting today not only in Alipur but also in many other parts of India is of supreme importance, not merely another occasion for pomp and pageantry. You work to run your homes. The affairs of the country are similarly managed by work and not by idle talk. We are now talking in terms of a big revolution, a peaceful revolution of co-operation, not of turmoil and the breaking of heads. It is in this manner that we shall transform our country. Peacefully, we shall remove the evils of our country and promote a better order. Each one of you must have some grievance or another and my heart is heavy with sorrow. A bad thing about our country is that people complain too much. We all have our shortcomings and there are many defects in our country. They cannot be removed by complaining but only by hard work. I hope and trust that the work that has begun today, on the 2nd October, the Gandhi Jayanti Day, will be done well. It will, I hope, make progress and shake up the country and bring about a revolution. In this work America, a great country, has helped us and we are grateful to her. But remember that no country can advance with outside aid only. Ultimately, a country progresses because of its own strength and work. How can we complete our work and win our battle with another man's strength ? The task before us is in the nature of a trial of strength. So let us start this sacred work and continue it with vigour so that our country may become happy and prosperous.

5. THE MOTIVE FORCE

The Community Programme constitutes the dynamo providing the motive force for the successful implementa-

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Address at the Development Commissioners' Conference, New Delhi, April 18, 1953

tion of the Five Year Plan. The whole object of the Community Development Programme is to raise the general level of the standard of living of the average man—an object which in the Indian context is quite a revolutionary thing. Whether we can bring about this revolution in a peaceful, co-operative way is of the highest importance, because violent methods demand a tremendous initial price and their ultimate outcome is totally uncertain.

In a fast-changing world India stands out as something solid, but unless the people work hard, this solidity will fade away. We have, therefore, to be wary and strive hard to maintain and strengthen our independence through economic development, which is basic and fundamental. The Five Year Plan, because of the limitations of available resources, did not go very far, that is, as far as circumstances demanded, but its approach was excellent. The effort of the people should be to make it go further. In this effort, the Community Development programme and the National Extension Service, which will be shortly finalised, have a very vital role to play. If through the operation of these programmes a change of outlook among the people is generated, we will go a very long way, because with a change in the people's outlook, the pace of progress will be much faster.

The biggest revolution that has happened in the modern world is the technological revolution which has totally changed the face of the world. Technology means power but in order to take full advantage of it the mind must be prepared to appreciate its significance in a historical perspective and to adjust it to the requirements of the situation on hand.

India is passing through a crucial period—a period of transition from foreign rule to an independent prosperous nation. When foreign rule disappeared from the country, it kept certain artificial structures, for example, the princes. The entire structure soon collapsed. In fact, the world was amazed at the rapidity with which it collapsed;

the main reason was that such structures, which were artificially propped up, did not have any inherent strength; with the removal of the prop they crumbled. None the less, some time must be taken for the change-over to be completed and the period of transition is necessarily somewhat painful.

Again, removal of foreign rule from India meant release of all kinds of forces which for so long had remained suppressed. It is no use getting angry with such forces. We have to bring about a revolution on many fronts. But this revolution does not mean breaking of heads. It consists in bringing about a situation which ensures a change of outlook, but the pace of revolution has to be adjusted. If it is too fast, it might bring in counter-revolution. On the other hand, it is necessary that progress should be fast enough as the people are not prepared to wait indefinitely.

In the above context, economic problems assume very great importance, not only because a higher standard of living means a happier existence, but the ultimate strength of a nation is its economic strength. In the final equation the armed forces of a country constitute only a small part of its strength; the rest of the strength consists of its economic power and the morale of the people. By strengthening the country economically it is possible to satisfy the forces that were let loose by the upsurge of freedom, because it is only by providing a higher standard of living, more employment and more consumer goods that the immediate needs of the people will be satisfied.

But mass production of commodities alone cannot raise the standard of living unless there is mass consumption which means that the mass, as a whole, must have greater purchasing power. The simplest way whereby the people in general would have greater purchasing power is to create work, which again will keep the industrial machinery functioning.

There is no basic conflict, between big and small-scale industries because there is a vast field which will remain

unexplored even after considerable industrial expansion has taken place. But here again technology is most important because small-scale industries can survive and flourish only if their technique is good. There is no doubt that their technique can be improved and it is necessary that people should think of new techniques. In India there is plenty of scope for profit by technological advance; for example, an increase in the production of wheat from 10 md. per acre to about 15 md., which would still be below the average production rate in many advanced countries, will make a world of difference to India. This can be done by the application of intensive cultivation methods and modern agricultural practices.

Fortunately, India has several advantages, one of which is a continuous political leadership before and after Independence. While this provides a certain continuity of thought and action, we should not be complacent about the progress to be made as people are not prepared to wait for long. On the other hand, it is necessary for the people to realise that immediate improvement in the standard of living is a difficult thing to attain, as the history of development of advanced countries shows. At the initial period of their planning, these countries had to undergo tremendous sacrifices and privations. India is trying to perform the task of economic upliftment in a democratic way. It is a tremendous challenge to our countrymen. The Community Programme and its successor organisation, the National Extension Service, which constitute the spearheads of rural development work, are something basic and will show how the democratic process of mass development can succeed.

6. CENTRES OF HUMAN ACTIVITY

The name of the periodical (*Kurukshetra*) reminds one of a great epoch and a great war in India's history. On that historic plain, where this war was fought, we fight another war of a very different kind. This is a war against our own failings, against poverty and ignorance, and all their terrible brood.

Let us look upon this struggle in the context of history and that of this vast land of India. We face a terrific problem, and yet the potential helpers are also many. We know that we have the human material and other resources to solve this problem if only we utilise them well.

People talk of money, and money is, no doubt, useful. But it is the human being that counts in the end and it is human beings who have made history and who have advanced the cause of humanity, not money. If we train and prepare the right type of human beings in India, then the rest is easy. Our experience of the last few years has shown us that we can do this and also overcome the difficulties in the way.

All over India we have centres of human activity which are like lamps spreading their light more and more in the surrounding darkness. This light has to grow till it covers the land. Among these centres, there is Nilokheri which has achieved a good deal of fame in India and outside. That brings a greater responsibility on Nilokheri and on other like centres. They are the examples for others to follow and they must keep up high standards, because it is quality that will tell in the end, not quantity.

I send my greetings and good wishes to all those silent workers throughout the length and breadth of India who,

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Message for *Kurukshetra*, October, 1953

are engaged in this tremendous adventure of building up a new India.

7. THE DEMOCRATIC APPROACH

It has been my privilege to move about the country, to come in touch with millions and millions of my countrymen and to have a certain measure of emotional attachment for the people. I am not merely fond of them, but I admire them and I have respect for them wherever I go. I find even in the smallest peasant some degree of that passion to go ahead and make good. I go to the remote villages in our mountain regions in the Himalayas and the demand there is for two things—communications and schools.

It is extraordinary how anxious and keen they are to get a school. They go a step further and say, 'if you have no resources at present, we will build the school. Give us a teacher'. It is astonishing how much voluntary work has been done by our people in the last year. Many hundreds of miles of roads, many of them in the mountains, have been made by voluntary labour, a large number of school buildings and dispensaries have been built, and tanks and small canals have been dug. People are eager to work, provided always they have a feeling that they are doing something for themselves.

When they realise that they are doing something for their own benefit, they work hard and do not mind how much trouble it causes them. It is not particularly easy, perhaps, to make a peasant in a small village even think in terms of a great country, of our Five-Year Plan and other schemes, and yet I find it is not very difficult either if a proper approach is made. Once he feels partnership

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November, 1953

in a common task, we can get anything out of him—enthusiasm, of course, but hard work too.

The job we have undertaken is a tremendous one. In the ultimate analysis, it is that of making 360 million people in India go up in the scale of things. You cannot do this unless large numbers of them help you. If you think on democratic lines, then you must make the democratic approach; you go to them and not order them about.

People think today in terms of social justice. They accept less and less the dictates of 'fate' or 'kismat'—'because I am poor, I must remain poor'. Therefore, inevitably, we have to aim at the removal of the differences between the rich and the poor. We have to aim at equality of opportunity for everyone.

8. A FASCINATING ADVENTURE

I am greatly interested in the development of Community Projects and the National Extension Service and attach the greatest importance to them. The last two years or so have, I think, justified this great experiment and both those who are in some sense connected with this vast undertaking and the general public have begun to realise the significance of this work. It is not merely working for some improvement in some selected places. The concept is much vaster. It means really covering the whole of this great country and building up a new India from the roots upwards. There can be no greater or more fascinating adventure than this. Those of us, who are partners in this work, must therefore have some sense of pride in it and a feeling of exhilaration that they are participating in a historic task.

Message to the Development Commissioners' Conference Ootacamund, May, 1954

The bigger the task, the greater the responsibility. This work has grown and continues to grow. It has already covered a substantial part of India and in the years to come we hope that it will reach every village in this country. Mere extent, of course, means little. It is the quality of work that counts and the spirit with which it is undertaken. Essentially what we are endeavouring to do is to bring about a peaceful and yet far-reaching revolution in this vast land of India. If we succeed, and succeed we will, then we shall have done in our generation something worthwhile and something that will deserve permanent record. We have many dangers and perils to face and the greatest of these is complacency. If any of us feels complacent, he is out of step and has fallen out. We work in our respective areas, a village or block or a project area or a State, but wherever we might work, we have to think of it as a part of the larger whole. We have to develop, therefore, an integrated view of our work, integrated in many ways.

Indeed, the entire world today demands an integrated view and if we do not succeed in achieving this, conflict and disaster may well descend upon us. But, for the moment, let us forget the world and its problems and think of India and her problems. These are big enough.

We want an integrated India not only politically but emotionally. The essence of planning is to bring about this integration through numerous approaches. Integration means co-operation at every level and an understanding that progress lies in the common effort. Planning means a close co-ordination of the work of the Central Government with that of the States. At the Centre there has to be that co-ordination between the manifold activities of the Union Government. Each Ministry does not stand by itself; it is a part of the Government of India. So also is the relationship between the States and the Centre. This idea of planning, co-ordination and integration should spread in village, in town and in State.

The Community Projects envisage co-ordination of a number of activities. They cannot be separated or viewed as isolated activities. The object is to build the human being and the group and to make him and the group advance in many ways. Therefore, the activities in the Community Project must be closely co-ordinated and worked to this end.

Officials and non-officials have both their part to play in this work. Both are essential. Officials should bring the experience of training and disciplined service. The non-officials should represent and bring that popular urge and enthusiasm which gives life to a movement. Both have to think and act in a dynamic way and develop initiative. The official has to develop the qualities of the popular leader; the people's representatives have to develop the discipline and training of the official. So they approximate to each other and both should be guided by the ideal of disciplined service in a common cause.

We want good men at the top to guide this great movement. But we want even more good men at the village level. We have to train up scores of thousands of village leaders who have a measure of initiative and pride in their work. I hope this conference of Development Commissioners will not be afraid to consider our failings. It is only by looking at them frankly that we can get rid of them. I hope also that their meeting will bring about a new feeling of solidarity and enthusiasm among them which they will communicate to their co-workers all over India.

9. PEOPLE'S PROJECTS

Three years ago I inaugurated the first conference of Development Commissioners for Community Projects. I

Message to the Development Commissioners' Conference, Simla, May, 1955

spoke bravely then of the great task ahead. None of us knew at the time how this new adventure would shape itself and what results it would bring.

Now three years later, the fourth conference of Development Commissioners is meeting to review their work and to plan for the future. Last year at Ootacamund, after considering the work done during two years, they decided to increase the pace and to spread out this network of Community Projects and the National Extension Service all over India. This was a very brave decision but I take it that the men who came to this decision did so realistically and knowing fully the nature of the task. They were, in fact, men who were themselves shouldering the burden of this vast scheme and were, therefore, talking with full knowledge of both the success obtained and the problems and difficulties ahead.

They are now meeting on the eve of our drawing up the Second Five Year Plan. Within six months' time from now we hope to present a draft of this Plan and within less than a year the Plan should be finalised and should begin functioning. I say finalised, but there can be no finality or rigidity about such a Plan. It must be flexible and capable of change and improvement as fresh experience is gathered. But some targets have to be kept in view and worked up to. There are obvious limiting factors and we cannot merely translate into the words and phrases of our Plan, our hopes and aspirations. While we should be idealistic, we have to be realistic also. We have to calculate our resources. These resources can partly be calculated in terms of past experience and partly in other and more uncertain terms. If our progress is to be faster than in the past, as we hope it should be, then a mere projection of the past is not adequate. The future must necessarily excel the past.

Resources are of many kinds—in money, in labour, in human beings properly attuned to the task before them. This latter is a very flexible and uncertain factor. It may,

under fortunate circumstances, exceed any estimate that we can make of it; it may also belie our expectations.

But we have now a certain experience to guide us and this experience of the past few years has increased our faith in our people, made us more self-reliant and emboldened us to think in much bigger terms than in the past.

Much has happened in these few years which has led to this result. But I think that the most significant development of these years has been in the domain of the Community Projects and the National Extension Service. Apart from the practical results which have been achieved—and these are both visible and considerable—there is something even more important, even though it cannot be measured and weighed. This imponderable factor is the spirit of the people, the removal of inertia of thought and action, the development of a team spirit in national work and the sense of partnership of the people in great undertakings.

This represents the new dynamism which is so essential to all progress. It means a social revolution in our ways of life and work which is creeping gradually but surely over the vast land of India.

It is because of this that the Community Projects and the National Extension Service have become, more than anything else, the symbols of the resurgent spirit of India. They have not only moved our own people, more especially in the rural area, but have attracted the attention of other parts of the world, more especially of countries in Asia and Africa which have to face rather similar problems. These Community schemes are not a replica or a copy of something from abroad, although we have learnt much from other countries. They are essentially an Indian growth, suited to Indian conditions and, therefore, with a solid foundation in the soil and the people of India. That is the reason for their strength and their vitality.

The National Extension Service lays a broad foundation all over the country for this work. The Community Projects are the bright, vital and dynamic sparks all over India from which radiate rays of energy, hope and enthusiasm. Both are necessary.

The country is committed to a socialistic pattern of society. To bring about this change we have to do many things in many spheres of activity. But the essential thing is to make freedom secure and broad-based to bring the people in close association and partnership with the apparatus of administration and more especially, with the working out of our Five Year Plans. We talk of the people's plan and we talk of the people's Community Project. That is the essence of our approach to this question. No great change can be brought about merely by governmental functioning, although that is important, and we aim at great changes. Therefore, it is necessary that these community schemes should be based on the intimate co-operation of the people.

10. IT IS GOING FAST

You know that one of the biggest things that we have done and are doing is the Community Projects and the National Extension Service blocks. I wonder how many of you have been to these areas. It is something really remarkable that is happening over the face of rural India and, without exaggeration, I say that it is a revolutionary thing that is happening over rural India, wherever these Community Projects are going on.

People coming from other countries have been astounded at what they have seen, but our own people do not realise it. People from diverse countries, England, the

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Extracts from remarks at a press conference

United States of America, Russia, Indonesia, Burma, West Asian countries—all these from different view-points have been surprised at this development, development not merely of more production, more this and more that, but the development of the human being. That is the important and the revolutionary thing.

So I should like to think of these projects, of the broad and big objectives which we have, and I should like you to bring this home to the people through your newspapers, journals, etc., because we want to carry them with us. We can never succeed in this programme unless we have the whole-hearted co-operation of a few hundred million people in India. We propose to have it fast. Only then we will get adequate resources and only then we will get the atmosphere, self-reliance etc., partly because of the success of the last Five Year Plan, the food position and some other things.

We have a good beginning, because the successful Community Projects have produced a new atmosphere in these areas and the Community Projects and the National Extension Service blocks are functioning today in a hundred thousand villages of India—a large number—and by the end of next year it will be 1,50,000 or so. It is going fast. Our main problem, in fact, is training of personnel for these on the lowest grade, the Village Level Worker, the supervisor and others. Having done that, our main problem still remains that these should be run by non-official sources by public co-operation.

11. THROUGH TRIAL AND ERROR

I think that we may modestly claim to have achieved a great deal in many fields of human endeavour during these past years in India. But I believe that the most

Message for *Kurukshetra* anniversary number, October, 1955

significant development in India has been this development of the Community Projects and National Extension Service in the vast rural areas of India. For the first time, it may be said with truth, we tackled the rural problem in a realistic way. This was not merely from above but rather by inducing the people themselves to solve their own problems. Something life-giving went to them and their eyes brightened and their arms began to function and their muscles became stronger. A process of rejuvenation set in. This has spread already to every remote village and hamlet in this great country.

The National Extension Service is the basic organisation that we are developing all over the country. But this is the foundation on which has to be built the living structure of the Community Projects. Without the Community Prjoects, the National Extension Service is in danger of becoming a routine organisation without the breath of life in it. Therefore, it has become important to develop both and for the Community Projects to be adequately spread all over the country, setting standards for even those areas where they have not been started.

It was hoped that this process of covering India with Community Projects and the National Extension Service would be completed by the end of the Second Five Year Plan. That was a tremendous task, for it required the training of multitudes of persons. We still hope to do so.

Because of the basic importance of the Community Projects, those who are intimately connected with them were anxious to spread them so that they might cover half the area, that is, they should be fifty per cent of the total effort. Many difficulties were pointed out and after long argument it was decided that we should aim at a minimum of forty per cent for the Community Projects. This decision was recently taken by the National Development Council and it is on these lines that we have to work.

We have thus to cover the whole of India with the National Extension Service and a minimum of forty

per cent of this has to be Community Projects. I hope that we shall succeed in this great endeavour.

12. CHANGING THE FACE OF RURAL INDIA

Training becomes necessary today in whatever field of activity you may be engaged in. In the field of activity which ought to require the utmost training, unfortunately, there are no tests; it is haphazard. I am referring to the politicians' work. No standard of training is laid down for them. In every other kind of work, there are set standards; whether it is scientific work, engineering, medicine, carpentry, etc., training is required. Sheer enthusiasm will not make you a good carpenter, an engineer or a doctor. Sheer enthusiasm, however, may make you a good politician. A politician may take people in. It is unfortunate.

Now, therefore, if India is to progress, we must have trained personnel in every walk of life. The more training we have, the more easily we become a first-class nation. We have our Community Projects and National Extension Service schemes. I do not think there is any example that I know of anywhere to compare with the rapid and tremendous expansion of these works in India in the rural areas. It started just three years ago. Now we are covering about 1,20,000 villages or more and we hope to cover about 5,00,000 villages in the course of the next six years. It is an astonishing and ambitious programme that we have. All these Community Projects require trained men. There are some first-class men at the top, some trained overseers and village workers. But the point is that we want trained men. And the next question arises whether the type of trained men we want in the country are produced in our training centres, in our universities and the like. It is a difficult problem.

Extracts from speech delivered at Madras, October 2, 1955

We are setting up a large number of training establishments for engineers, overseers, village workers, community workers, etc. Nevertheless, this question is there. Ultimately, it is not for lack of money that our work will stop. It will be for lack of trained personnel in some field or other; because, if we have a number of trained people in one field, there might be a bottleneck with regard to trained personnel in another and work stops. So, inevitably, we have various grades of trained people and untrained people. In this vast undertaking of building up a new India we are all partners.

I go about from one end of India to the other seeing new factories and great things, taking shape, and great river-valley projects developing and generating power and supplying water to our fields. I see in the rural areas our Community Projects and National Extension Service schemes spreading with speed which is remarkable and unprecedented in history. This is the biggest thing happening. Not this factory (Perambur Integrated Coach Factory) or hundred such factories, but only the hundreds of Community Projects could change the face of rural India. That is the great revolution which is taking place in India today, in the heart of India, in the villages of India which have been the backbone of our country for thousands of years. As I see this, I feel an excitement creeping over me to find a new India gradually taking shape, a new India not only in the things we are building, in the factories and the projects and the development schemes but even more so in the men, women and children, who are being helped to grow into their own in these various ways.

I think nothing has happened in any country in the world during the last few years so big in content and so revolutionary in design as the Community Projects in India. They are changing the face of rural India and in the course of the next five or six years they will cover every village in India. It is a tremendous adventure and we

shall only succeed if we consider it our common adventure. We must all work together for it. Men, women and, if I may say so, boys and girls and children, all of us have to take our share.

There is an idea current in this country, more than any other, that the person who does not do manual labour but sits at the table, is somewhat superior to the person who does manual work. I want to tell you quite frankly that I think the engineer who does not do manual work is not fit for the job, however high his position may be. The moment he thinks that he is above the manual work and that he is merely there to order about others, he ceases to function adequately. I appeal to almost every human being and, certainly, to the engineer that he should roll up his sleeves and get down to work and show to others how things can be done. In the United Kingdom, America, or the U.S.S.R., an engineer is not sitting in the office and issuing orders. The biggest people there do manual work. They get down on their knees and do work. But due to our caste tradition and the British official tradition we have numerous barriers. We have to uproot those barriers.

We have committed many mistakes; we are constantly committing mistakes, I may tell you, but at any rate, I hope we have the wisdom to know that we commit mistakes and try to correct them.

13. A BIG AND WORTHWHILE TASK

We have many conferences for which Ministers or officials gather together from the four corners of India. Sometimes I have pointed out that perhaps we have too many conferences, but the fact is that it is important for people from the different States to meet together frequently to discuss their common problems. India is a big country,

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Message to the Development Commissioners' Conference, May, 1956

and its problems have both a certain unity and a diversity. It is, therefore, important that all these problems should be viewed in the perspective and in the context of India as a whole. Our objective is to encourage a uniform development of India and not to increase the disparities that already exist in various areas.

Among these many conferences, the conference of Development Commissioners for Community Projects and National Extension Service has come to be of the highest importance to us. Conceived originally in a relatively small way, they grew rapidly and became something in the nature of a revolutionary force changing the face of rural India. That itself showed that they answered an urgent need of the time. They have made not only a difference in India and put a new life in the areas where they have functioned, but they have also attracted widespread attention from beyond the borders of India.

The success of these Community Programmes is partly due to the fact that they are not mere imitations of something happening elsewhere, but have grown out of the soil of India, and in line with the needs of today. Therefore, they are realistic and practical, in addition to being idealistic.

We have decided on developing a socialist pattern of society in India, and the Second Five Year Plan provides a foundation for this on which we shall have to build in the future. The Community Development Programme and the National Extension Service should form the essential ingredients of this foundation. To a large extent, these Community Programmes have put a new life in the countryside. The time now is for sustained and intensive work. This work must be directed more specially to :

(1) increased production in agriculture; and

(2) growth of village industries, which should progressively be organised as producers' co-operatives.

It must always be remembered that our production from land is exceedingly low, lower almost than that of any other country. All our future progress depends on increasing this production and going far beyond even the mark set for it in the Second Five Year Plan. If other countries, similarly situated, can increase their food production rapidly, there is no reason why we should not do so. This means essentially intensive cultivation, better seeds, better techniques, fertilisers, etc. It does not mean the introduction of any large-scale machinery. In this work, our Gram Sevaks and others should take an important part. Our Development Commissioners must realise that our success in this matter will largely be the measure of our success not only in the Community Development Scheme but in the Second Five Year Plan itself.

The Community Programme should necessarily keep in line with the village panchayats and co-operatives. We should develop the people's initiative in all these matters, so that they may rely upon themselves far more than on governmental agencies.

The target set in the Second Five Year Plan for the Community Programme is to cover the entire country. That is a big and worthwhile task, and it will require hard work from everyone. It will require the training of technical personnel. Above all, it will require faith and enthusiasm and the capacity to co-operate.

14. A NEW DIRECTION TO THE PROGRAMME

In the last three or four years we have built up a remarkable and rather, if I may use a very strong word, a wonderful organisation, and that is the Community Development Organisation, both for the Community Project aspect and for the National Extension Service. At the

Extracts from speech in Lok Sabha, September 13, 1956

present moment I have not got the exact figures, but roughly it covers a hundred million people in our rural areas, and that is fairly large coverage. And this is increasing, of course, every year. This is not a coverage for show purposes. You cannot 'show' several hundred thousands of villages. In the process of the next few years, it is intended to cover the whole of rural India with this programme.

The first thing I should like the House to appreciate is the organisational aspect of it. For the first time we have built up an organisation whereby in these particular areas which come within the scope of that organisation, we can reach from the top to the cultivator. There are links. The great difficulty in the past has been that very fine decisions were taken and resolutions were made by the Government of India or the State Governments, but they never trickled down to the poor farmer.

For the first time in our Community Development Organisation we have built up a magnificent organisation. I am not for the moment talking about the work that has already been done. It has been very good. There are at the present moment 15,000 Gram Sevaks. We give them a year's training. By and large, the Gram Sevaks and Gram Sevikas are a fine lot, earnest, enthusiastic, knowledgeable to some extent, and disciplined. They have done a very good piece of work. The Community Development Organisation has been interesting itself in agricultural matters. That is one of its chief jobs. But now we want to turn its attention much more pointedly and aggressively towards this agricultural development and make it almost its chief function. I do not wish to deprive it of its other functions which are highly important because, to some extent, it is the other functions that have given the tone to that organisation and that have aroused the enthusiasm of the people. Therefore, the other functions are important, but having built up that, we now want to turn it—and we are doing—in this direction.

How can we do this ? This first thing is that the Com-

munity Projects Organisation should, here at the Centre, be brought in close touch with our Food and Agriculture Ministry. Secondly, it should be in the closest touch with the State Agriculture Ministries. There has been, in the past, a fair measure of co-operation between the Community Projects Administration and the Food and Agriculture Ministry. But we want to bring them much closer together so that they may think alike and work alike and push alike. I would appeal to the State Agriculture Ministries also to co-operate and to receive the co-operation and help of the Community Development Organisation in the fullest measure and utilise the great organisation. The Community Projects in the States are not worked by the Government of India or by the Planning Commission: they are worked by the States. I have found that, although they are worked by States and worked very well by the States,—the Chief Minister is usually interested in this, the principal development officer is an officer of a very high degree and, therefore, one of the best—yet in some of the States, subject to any recent change, the connection between their own development officer working in the Community Projects and their Agriculture Ministries is not the closest. They work in different compartments. We want to remove that. I have not the shadow of a doubt that if this marriage between the Agriculture Ministries at the Centre and the States and the Community Projects Administration takes place, the results will be very gratifying.

15. A NEW CHAPTER

The Community Development schemes have now entered a new phase of their existence. A new Ministry of the Government of India deals with them and is named

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Message on the fourth anniversary of the Community Development Programme, October 2, 1956

after them. Probably this is the only instance where a country has a special Ministry for Community Development. This in itself shows not only the growth of the work of the Community Projects and the National Extension Service but also recognition of this growth and its vital importance.

The task of our Community Development schemes is to bring the message of hope to the masses of our people, to teach them self-reliance and confidence in themselves and the way to realise our objectives through hard and co-operative effort.

A new chapter has begun in this fascinating story of rural India, a new drama is being played in our broad fields and our innumerable villages. The actors in this drama are the tens of thousands of our village workers, organisers, etc. Indeed, the actors should include every man and woman and even child. May all of them have this sensation of playing in this great game of building up India, this great adventure that should ennoble their lives. It is through great effort that we grow, it is by allying ourselves to great causes that we also develop some touch of that greatness.

16. THE RIGHT APPROACH TO THE PEOPLE

I have spoken very frequently about the Community Development schemes and laid great stress on them. I have often said that they are the most revolutionary thing that is happening in India, and I mean it. I have felt, ever since we started, that they had the elements of basic revolution in rural India. Subsequent years have not changed my conviction; in fact they have added to it. It is not necessary, therefore, for me to say anything in defence

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Extracts from address at the Development Commissioners' Conference, Mussoorie, April 29, 1957

of or in praise of this programme to which I attach great importance.

It is a good thing, I think, that almost on the eve of this Conference the Evaluation Organisation's Report came out; and suddenly I find that most newspapers in India have been jerked into saying something about the work of the Community Development schemes because of this Report. Naturally they have tended to lay stress on the criticisms in that Report, and, quite rightly, and have felt that we have not been an successful as we claim to be. Perhaps it is so. So far as we are concerned, I think, while we must necessarily have some kind of a crusading spirit about this programme and about this work, it is far more important that we lay stress on mistakes made or the things not done, and which should actually have been done. In fact, it is more by the results of such evaluations than by messages from the Prime Minister and the like that the success of the progress can be assessed.

Now, I do not quite know what to talk about. You have, I believe, twenty Committees here discussing various aspects of the Community Development work and many points have come out. I have listened to some. I wish I had been here for other discussions too. I have the feeling that it is of the highest importance that we should succeed in rural India. I must say that although we are trying to establish heavy industries and the like, which are very important and essential, we cannot raise living standards and get going in India unless we come back to the vast rural population and activise it. Factories and other things are important but the greater part of our resources come from agricultural operations in the rural areas.

Last year, I remember, the Prime Minister of Canada told me that people did not realise where the principal resources come from. Canada is a highly industrialised nation and you probably know there has been a tremendous boom in that country. They discovered oil in vast quantities and so many other things, and thus made

enormous sums of money. Yet, the Prime Minister told me that all these things and big industries gave them just what one province gave them through agriculture. The name of this province was Alberta and it produced more wealth in terms of wheat than all the industries of Canada put together. If that is so in Canada, you can well realise the importance of agricultural production in India.

The Chairman in his opening address stressed the importance of increasing agricultural production in India. This is vital because even a slight addition to agricultural production can give us far more resources than we can get out of loans or gifts from outside or inside the country. Another important aspect is that the democratic apparatus of political consciousness demands betterment. We cannot wait and leave rural areas to wait, till we do something and then come back to them, because in the final analysis, it is the people in the rural areas that elect most of the members to Parliament and the State Assemblies. They can make governments and upset governments.

How can an increase in agricultural production be brought about? Training in improved techniques is no doubt essential. But what is far more important is the correct approach to the people, the need for generating a new spirit of excitement, of doing things, in the people. I remember how Gandhiji, not long ago, electrified the whole nation with a new hope and ambition. He was a remarkable individual and we cannot compare with him. Nevertheless we can learn something from him. We should discard the air of superiority and identify ourselves with the villagers by approaching them in their dress, talking to them in their language, partaking of their food and by squatting with them on their floor. The strict official approach at once creates a wide gulf between us and the villagers and does not achieve any results.

A great deal is said about the evils of bureaucracy. Yet any system—Socialist, Communist or a Welfare State —has got to be bureaucratic. After all, governments are

run by large numbers of people. What is needed is that the gap which separates the bureaucrat from the people must disappear so far as it can. This is all the more necessary in the case of persons working for the Community Development organisation. You must shed your official character and gain the confidence of the people. We have aroused tremendous expectations and yet we know that the task before us is such that it cannot be completed for a long, long time. You cannot really convert the whole of India and get something into it in the course of four years, five years or ten years. But I think we can bring about a change faster than most people think. Once you get to pull our people out of certain ruts of inaction, their pace will increase. What you should aim at is to pull them out and set them on the right path and make them march along it as fast as they can go.

Now, we have talked about co-operation. It is not merely an economic question, but is rather more basic. On the international plane it has become of tremendous importance that countries should live in peace together, should tolerate each other. Otherwise the whole world is in danger of perishing. There is no in-between place. The development of humanity through science and technology has brought people so close to each other's activities that they have to co-operate or to quarrel. If that applies on the international scale, obviously it applies much more on the national scale. In countries—more developed countries—they do co-operate. We in India, in spite of our political unity, have not yet developed that emotional unity. I have no doubt that so far as agriculture is concerned, you will not only be able to take advantage of the present technical advances, but of the many things that are going to come in the future, unless you can function either as a very big farm or on a co-operative scale. Big farms we do not want. We do not want huge landlords. But on the co-operative scale, let smali men get together and work together and take advantage of scientific advancement in agriculture, with the peasants retaining their individual identities. I have no doubt, therefore, that

the only way of work will be of co-operative farming. But as I said, we cannot and we should not impose this. Now I have a very definite and clear distinction between the co-operative working of farms, etc., and collective working. There is a vast difference in quality, apart from quantity. I do not myself like the collective way because I want the individual to feel a certain intimate touch with his partner in business, but all this is not for us to decide. We let things go and see how things happen, but I do feel that we should keep this ideal and tell people about it. Let them understand, and if possible, work it out. That is the first thing in co-operative working. Do it by all means, but unless you put this idea across to the people all the time and train them, make them think about it, it will be difficult to convert them and then there will be delay in achieving what you want to do. But remember, I want this not only for greater production and the use of science in it, but also to develop co-operative thinking, the habit of working together. The individual farmer is an excellent person —a small farmer or a big one—but he is rather too self-centered, and he cannot remain self-centered in the future, because of scientific advancement. If he does not bring his mind out of that self-centeredness, then he is bound to be in difficulties in the future. So, apart from the practical consequences, psychological and other consequences also convince me that we should go in this direction.

There was some talk about the Bhoodan Movement, Gram Dan, etc. It is obvious that no Government can go about asking people to give up their land. It cannot be a governmental policy. You cannot base your policy on people giving up their land all over the country and, if not all over the country, you cannot pick up people and ask them to do it. But I have no doubt in my mind that Acharya Vinoba's movement has a great significance, practically for what it achieves, and for the new psychology that it creates in regard to land and landholdings; it weakens a little the terrific passion for private possession of land, and that is a good thing. Therefore, I for my part,

and certain others, welcome it and in a distant way try to encourage it by our sympathy. It would have been rather absurd for me as Prime Minister to go about talking to people to give up land. In the nature of things, Government cannot do that. But Vinoba's movement is essentially in the right direction, both from what it achieves and from the happiness it creates. What is Vinoba's ideal, is my ideal also. I welcome this movement. I think that land should be held in common by the people of the village, and that co-operative farming should be encouraged on such land. I do think that the Community Development movement should co-operate, in so far as it is possible, with Vinobaji's Gram Dan or Bhoodan movement. There may be many difficulties in the way, as somebody mentioned here; I think most of the difficulties will probably be removed if they are discussed in a frank way. Our approach should be a friendly, co-operative one, trying to understand, and explaining to them what we cannot do. Situated as we are, we cannot do certain things. After all, you are all representatives of Governments trying to find a way out to co-operate to the best possible extent. Without Government co-operation I do not quite see what the Bhoodan Movement can do with the land. In fact, it has been getting co-operation. Acts have been passed by the State Legislatures, and so these villages will be in a sense a part of the Government.

To speak for myself frankly I am not really enamoured of the Indian village, as it is. I want it to change completely, gradually no doubt, but completely. I do not see why we should praise all the backwardness of the Indian village. I admit that a peasant is a finer man than a city man. This is perfectly true, but he is backward. Why should we keep him backward? I want villages to have all kinds of amenities. I do not think our villages can remain isolated for long from the rest of the country. All kinds of forces will powerfully influence them, as India changes. That will be a welcome change.

I am glad that some kind of a close liaison is being

established between the Community Development movement and the Central Social Welfare Board. In so far as women and children are concerned, it would be wrong for the Community Development people to have a separate organisation. They should take advantage of the work of the Central Social Welfare Board in this field. This Board has done one very good thing. It has put a large number of women into the field of child welfare. This is very important because women can influence children much more powerfully than men. I wish more village women could be associated with such work. They may be uneducated, but in the long run they will do better work than educated city women, because they are in more intimate touch with the people.

In the end, I will say a few words about training. I have no formal suggestions to make, but I do not want you to develop a caste of trained people. Perhaps untrained people, who have good ideas, who have faith, enthusiasm, energy and capacity for doing hard work can carry your message much further than your trained men. In the early stages of Gandhiji's movement we had no trained people; we had men and women who had faith, energy and enthusiasm. They carried his message all over the countryside like wild fire. Do not, therefore, be afraid of using untrained people, wherever you can, provided you think they have some energy and enthusiasm. You arouse in them the necessary enthusiasm and they will go round and spread your message to the villages without interfering with the rest of your work.

17. THE SALT OF THE EARTH

Every year I am asked to send a message to *Kurukshetra* for the Community Development programme.

Message for *Kurukshetra* anniversary number, October, 1957

I have gladly done so because of my great interest in this programme and the importance I have attached to it.

This programme now covers more than half of rural India and it is advancing with the intention of covering all our villages.

But it is not the extent of its coverage or the number of villages that are included in this scheme that is of primary interest to me. What I am deeply interested in is the quality of the work done and the extent to which this programme is vitalising our rural people and producing better human beings.

Nothing can be more important than this vital work of building Indian humanity. It is the peasant who has borne the burden of India for ages past. It is on the growth and betterment of our peasantry that the future of India must necessarily depend. Today we are laying the greatest stress on two lines of advance—greater food production and more cottage and small-scale industries. Food has become the corner-stone of our planning and this means more intensive growth. We have made many appeals in the past for this purpose and they have brought results. The time has now come not merely for general appeals but for a specific and planned approach to each village and almost to each family, so that targets may be laid down and we may work up to them.

What is the future of our peasantry ? The great number of them have barely one or two acres of land to cultivate. It is possible and necessary to increase the yield of this little patch of land and thus to better somewhat the condition of the peasant. But there is a limit to this, the limit laid down by the smallness of that holding.

There are too many people in India subsisting on land. This means that many people must take to other activities and occupations. Some of these can be whole-time activities and some part-time allied to agriculture. Herein was the importance of our cottage and small-scale industries programme. No doubt, as large industries grow up many

people from the rural area will be attracted to them. But however, speedy the growth of large industries, the major problem of unemployment and other occupations will not be solved by them. It can only be progressively solved by the development of cottage and small scale industries.

Even so, how will the peasant function with his small patch of land ? It is not possible for him to take advantage of modern techniques or the facilities offered by new methods unless he works in co-operation with others of his kind. Co-operation is the key to his future growth and the co-operative movement thus must spread all over the country and comprise all the villages and peasants of this vast land.

What kind of co-operation ? There are the so-called service co-operatives, there are those which deal with credit. We have in the past laid stress mostly on credit co-operatives and they are no doubt helpful but they are not enough. We must cover a much larger field through our co-operative movement. Indeed, the co-operative movement should enter into the life of the peasant in as many ways as possible and, together with the panchayat, must be the main bulwark of our rural structure. The next stage of co-operation is joint farming and there has been some argument about this. I have no doubt that joint farming, wherever possible and agreed to, will be good, but it must be clearly understood that this can be no imposition and can only be brought in by the agreement of the parties. To begin with, there must be the service co-operatives and as these succeed, the next step may well be some joint farms. Where new land is brought into cultivation, it may be possible to have this joint cultivation to begin with.

I would prefer relatively small co-operatives comprising one or two or three villages. It seems essential to me that a co-operative should not be controlled from above, not too officialised but should represent the spirit of self-reliance and self-growth of the people. Also there should

be an intimacy about its members, otherwise it becomes impersonal and difficult for the villagers to consider as something their own.

The whole movement, as our entire political and economic structure in India, must be conditioned by the democratic process.

The Community Development programmes have undertaken a mighty task and they are gradually building up a trained and peaceful army of young men and young women. If they are trained properly and work well, they will be the salt of the Indian earth.

18. THE WEB AND WOOF OF RURAL INDIA

My colleague, Shri S. K. Dey, has asked me again for my annual message for the National Conference on Community Development. I am beginning to doubt the value of such messages, but my interest in the work of Community Development is so great and my regard for Shri S. K. Dey is such that I cannot very well say no to his request.

There is abundant criticism of the work being done in the Community Development areas. Much of this criticism may well be justified. But the major fact remains that the Community Development progamme in India is by far the most revolutionary thing that we have undertaken and the results so far achieved are truly astonishing. I say this knowing full well that we have failed in many places and in many ways to do what we intended to do. It is only five and a half years ago that we started this programme and now it is the web and woof of rural India. This is not so much because of its vast spread over hundreds of thousands of villages, but rather the new life which it has been creating and which we see bubbling up where there

Message to the Community Development Conference, Mount Abu, May, 1958

was stagnation and lifelessness before. In fact, we have roused new forces from the depths of India and the question is how far we can direct them into right channels.

It is the business of this National Conference on Community Development to consider the multitude of problems that face them and to give proper direction. In the ultimate analysis, it is men and women that we are training and making. Everything flows from the trained, self-reliant and co-operative individual. We have to train the individual and we have to develop the spirit of community life. It is only through self-reliant co-operation that our people will flourish and go ahead. I am a member of the Government and I think that the Government must play a great part in this business of building up a new India. But I am convinced that the real vital energy comes from the people and not from Governments.

What do we aim at ? To have in every village a school, a panchayat, and an all-purpose co-operative. Thus we lay the basic foundations for our political, economic and cultural development and build up self-govering democratic units in the larger democracy of India.

What are our immediate objectives ? A considerable increase in agricultural production and, more especially, production of food-grains, and the development of village and small industries. An increase in our food production is of vital importance today. Indeed it is by far the most important problem that we have to solve in the near future. Everything else depends upon it. Industries will flourish only with the growth of agriculture and the amenities in village life that we want will also flow from our progress in agricultural production.

Community Development in India has arrived at a crucial stage. Future success will be measured, not in vague impressions but in actual production, of foodgrains especially. Every Community block, therefore, must keep this in mind and work unceasingly to bring this about. Every block must go down to each village and each

peasant household to ensure that this effort is made on the widest individual scale.

The Community movement must now pass progressively to the people. Government help and participation is necessary and will continue. But it has now to become more and more a people's movement and not something officially run from above.

In order to awaken the people, it is the woman who has to be awakened. Once she is on the move, the household moves, the village moves and the country moves and, through the women, the children are brought into this picture and given the opportunities of a healthier life and better training. Thus, through the children of today, we build the India of tomorrow.

19. THE BASIC APPROACH

We in India have many grave internal problems to face. But even a consideration of these internal problems inevitably leads to a wider range of thought. Unless we have some clarity of vision or, at any rate, are clear as to the questions posed to us, we shall not get out of the confusion that afflicts the world today.

The basic fact of today is the tremendous pace of change in human life. In my own life, I have seen amazing changes, and I am sure that, in the course of the life of the next generation, these changes will be even greater, if humanity is not overwhelmed and annihilated by an atomic war.

Nothing is so remarkable as the progressive conquest or undertaking of the physical world by the mind of man, and this process is continuing at a terrific pace. Man need no longer be a victim of external circumstances, at any rate to a very large extent. While there has been this

Published in the AICC *Economic Review*, August 15, 1958

conquest of external conditions, there is at the same time the strange spectacle of a lack of moral fibre and of self-control in man as a whole. Conquering the physical world, he fails to conquer himself. Science is advancing far beyond the comprehension of a very great part of the human race, and posing problems which most of us are incapable of understanding, much less of solving. Hence, the inner conflict and tumult of our times. On the one side, there is this great and overpowering progress in science and technology and of their manifold consequences, on the other, a certain mental exhaustion of civilisation itself.

Religion comes into conflict with rationalism. The disciplines of religion and social usage fade away without giving place to other disciplines, moral or spiritual. Religion, as practised, either deals with matters rather unrelated to our normal lives and thus adopts an ivory tower attitude, or is allied to certain social usages which do not fit in with the present age. Rationalism, on the other hand, with all its virtues, somehow appears to deal with the surface of things, without uncovering the inner core. Science itself has arrived at a stage when vast new possibilities and mysteries loom ahead.

In the ancient days, life was simpler and more in contact with nature. Now it becomes more and more complex and more and more hurried, without time for reflection or even of questioning. The old question still faces us, as it has faced humanity for ages past : what is the meaning of life ? The old days of faith do not appear to be adequate, unless they can answer the questions of today. In a changing world, living should be a continuous adjustment to these changes and happenings. It is the lack of this adjustment that creates conflicts.

The old civilisations, with the many virtues that they possess, have obviously proved inadequate. The new Western civilisation, with all its triumphs and achievements and also with its atomic bombs, also appears inadequate and, therefore, the feeling grows that there is something

wrong with our civilisation. Indeed, essentially our problems are those of civilisation itself. Religion gave a certain moral and spiritual discipline; it also tried to perpetuate superstition and social usages. Indeed, those superstitions and social usages enmeshed and overwhelmed the real spirit of religion. Disillusionment followed. Communism comes in the wake of this disillusionment and offers some kind of faith and some kind of discipline. To some extent it fills a vacuum. It succeeds in some measure by giving a content to man's life. But in spite of its apparent success, it fails, partly because of its rigidity, but, even more so, because it ignores certain essential needs of human nature. There is much talk in communism of the contradictions of capitalist society and there is truth in that analysis. But we see the growing contradictions within the rigid framework of communism itself. Its suppression of individual freedom brings about powerful reactions. Its contempt for what might be called the moral and spiritual side of life not only ignores something that is basic in man, but also deprives human behaviour of standards and values. Its unfortunate association with violence encourages a certain evil tendency in human beings.

I have the greatest admiration for many of the achievements of the Soviet Union. Among these great achievements is the value attached to the child and the common man. Their systems of education and health are probably the best in the world. But it is said, and rightly, that there is suppression of individual freedom there. Any yet the spread of education in all its forms is itself a tremendous liberating force which ultimately will not tolerate that suppression of freedom. This again is another contradiction. Unfortunately, Communism became too closely associated with the necessity for violence and thus the idea which it placed before the world became a tainted one. The means distorted the ends. We see here the powerful influence of wrong means and methods.

Communism charges the capitalist structure of society with being based on violence and class conflict. I think

this is essentially correct, though that capitalist structure itself has undergone and is continually undergoing a change because of democratic and other struggles and inequality. The question is how to get rid of this and have a classless society with equal opportunities for all. Can this be achieved through methods of violence, or is it be possible to bring about the change through peaceful methods ? Communism has definitely allied itself to the approach of violence. Even if it does not indulge normally in physical violence, its language is of violence, its thought is violent and it does not seek to change by persuasion or peaceful democratic pressures, but by coercion and indeed by destruction and extermination. Fascism has all these evil aspects of violence and extermination in their grossest forms and, at the same time, has no acceptable ideal.

This is completely opposed to the peaceful approach which Gandhiji taught us. Communists as well as anti-communists seem to imagine that a principle can be stoutly defended only by language of violence, and by condemning those who do not accept it. For both of them, there is only black and white. That is the old approach of the bigoted aspects of some religions. It is not the approach of tolerance of feeling that perhaps others might have some share of the truth also. Speaking for myself, I find this approach wholly unscientific, unreasonable and uncivilised, whether it is applied in the realm of religion or economic theory or anything else. I prefer the old pagan approach of tolerance, apart from its religious aspects. But, whatever we may think about it, we have arrived at a stage in the modern world when an attempt at forcible imposition of ideas on any large section of people is bound to fail ultimately. In the present circumstances this will lead to war and tremendous destruction. There will be no victory, only defeat for everyone.

Thus, violence cannot possibly lead today to a solution of any major problem because violence has become much too terrible and destructive. The moral approach to this question has now been powerfully reinforced by the practical aspect.

If the society we aim at cannot be brought about by large-scale violence, will small-scale violence help ? Surely not, partly because that itself may lead to large-scale violence and partly because it produces an atmosphere of conflict and of disruption. It is absurd to imagine that in a conflict the socially progressive forces are bound to win. In Germany both the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party were swept away by Hitler. This may well happen in other countries too. In India any appeal to violence is particularly dangerous because of its inherent disruptive character. We have too many fissiparous tendencies for us to take risks. But all these are relatively minor considerations. The basic thing, I believe, is that wrong means will not lead to right results and that is no longer merely an ethical doctrine but a practical proposition.

Some of us have been discussing this general background and, more especially, the conditions in India. It is often said that there is a sense of frustration and depression in India and the old buoyancy of spirit is not to be found at a time when enthusiasm and hard work are most needed. This is not merely in evidence in our country. It is in a sense a world phenomenon. An old and valued colleague said that this was due to our not having a philosophy of life and indeed the world also is suffering from this lack of a philosophical approach. In our efforts to ensure the material prosperity of the country, we have not paid any attention to the spiritual element in human nature. Therefore, in order to give the individual and the nation a sense of purpose, something to live for and, if necessary, to die for, we have to revive some philosophy of life and give, in the wider sense of the word, a spiritual background to our thinking. We talk of a Welfare State and of democracy and socialism. They are good concepts but they hardly convey a clear and unambiguous meaning. The question arises as to what our ultimate objective should be. Democracy and socialism are means to an end, not the end itself.

We talk of the good of society. It is agreed that the individual should not be sacrificed and indeed that real

be considered apart from these political elements or the inevitability of violence. It tells us that the general character of social, political and intellectual life in a society is governed by its productive resources. As those productive resources change and develop, so the life and thinking of the community changes.

Imperialism or colonialism suppressed and suppresses the progressive social forces, Inevitably it aligns itself with certain privileged groups or classes because it is interested in preserving the social and economic status quo. Even after a country has become independent, it may continue to be economically dependent on other countries. This kind of thing is euphemistically called having close cultural and economic ties.

We discuss sometimes the self-sufficiency of the village. This should not be mixed up with the idea of decentralisation though it may be a part of it. While decentralisation is desirable to the largest possible extent, if it leads to old and rather primitive methods of production, then it simply means that we do not utilise modern methods which have brought great material advance to some countries of the West. That is, we remain poor and, what is more, tend to become poorer because of the pressure of an increasing population. I do not see any way out of the vicious circle of poverty except by utilising the new sources of power which science has placed at our disposal. Being poor, we have no surplus to invest and we sink lower and lower.

We have to break through this barrier by profiting by the new sources of power and modern techniques. But, in doing so, we should not forget the basic human element and the fact that our objective is individual improvement and the lessening of inequalities; and we must not forget the ethical and spiritual aspects of life which are ultimately the basis of culture and civilisation and which have given some meaning to life.

It has to be remembered that it is not by some magic adoption of socialist or capitalist method that poverty

suddenly leads to riches. The only way is through hard work and increasing the productivity of the nation and organising an equitable distribution of its products. It is a lengthy and difficult process. In a poorly developed country, the capitalist method offers no chance. It is only through a planned approach on socialistic lines that steady progress can be attained though even that will take time. As this process continues, the texture of our life and thinking gradually changes.

Planning is essential because otherwise we waste our resources which are very limited. Planning does not mean a mere collection of projects or schemes, but a thought-out approach of how to strengthen the base and pace of progress so that the community advances on all fronts. In India we have a special problem of extreme poverty in certain large regions, apart from the general poverty of the country. We have always a difficult choice before us : whether to concentrate on production by itself in selected and favourable areas, or try to develop the backward areas at the same time, so as to lessen the inequalities between regions. A balance has to be struck and an integrated national plan has to be evolved. That national plan need not and indeed should not have rigidity. It need not be based on any dogma, but should rather take the existing facts into consideration. It may, and I think in present-day India it should, encourage private enterprise in many fields, though even that private enterprise must necessarily fit in with the national plan and be subject to such controls as are considered necessary.

Land reforms have a peculiar significance, because without them more especially in a highly congested country like India, there can be no radical improvement in productivity in agriculture. But the main object of land reforms is a deeper one. They are meant to break up the old class structure of a society that is stagnant.

We want social security, but we have to recognise that social security only comes when a certain stage of develop-

ment has been reached. Otherwise we shall have neither social security nor any development.

It is clear that, in the final analysis, it is the quality of the human beings that counts. It is man that builds up the wealth of a nation, and promotes its cultural progress. Hence education and health are of high importance so as to produce that quality in human beings. We suffer from a lack of resources, yet we have always to remember that it is right education and good health that will provide the foundation for economic as well as cultural and spiritual progress.

A national plan has thus both a short-term objective and a long-term one. The long-term objective gives a true perspective. Without it short-term planning is of little avail and will lead us into blind alleys. Planning will always be perspective planning and at the same time keep in view the physical achievements for which we strive. In other words, physical planning is important, though it is obviously limited and conditioned by financial resources and economic conditions.

What has happened in the past in the industrially advanced countries has little bearing on us today. As a matter of fact, the countries that are advanced were economically better off than India today, in terms of per capita income, before their industrialisation began. Western economics, therefore, though helpful, have little bearing on our present-day problems. So also have Marxist economics which are in many ways out of date, even though they throw a considerable light on economic processes. We have thus to do our own thinking, profiting by the example of others, but essentially trying to find a path for ourselves suited to our own conditions.

In considering these economic aspects of our problems, we have always to remember the basic approach of peaceful means; and perhaps we might also keep in view the old Vedantic ideal of the life force which is the inner base of of everything that exists.

20. PANCHAYAT—THE FOUNDATION

As you are well aware, local self-government or the panchayat is the foundation of governmental structure. Unless this foundation is sound the upper structure would be weak. Admittedly, the people who run them (panchayats) have their good and bad points. We know this and we are told that we should not rely on them. This is an argument which, if once accepted, will lead to drastic consequences. We know that they will make mistake, but even then we have to give them the chance to function and get training. Unless we believe in an institution we would obviously not try to advance it.

Some time ago the Government of India had appointed a rural credit survey committee which told us of the shortcomings that villagers were suffering from and suggested, in particular the formation of co-operatives. I do accept that there are shortcomings in our people and they do not have the experience and are bound to make mistakes, but there is no other way than to have faith in them, depend on them and give them responsibilities. The responsibilities might be misused at times, but when we consider that we do not aim at imposing any structure from above, we have no other alternative.

Shri S. K. Dey has referred to a number of things, particularly the panchayats, their sizes, their accounts, and their resources. We cannot lay down any hard and fast rules in respect of these. In my opinion we should give them more and more responsibility and believe in them and keep perhaps some powers in our hands to correct them when they do make mistakes. If they have to consult us about everything, their responsibility loses its meaning.

Address at the Fourth Meeting of the Central Council of Local Self-Government, October 27, 1958

There is a deplorable tendency in our governmental structure to do any and everything after consulting every-one else which involves a good deal of references and notings. This delays the work, and no one is responsible because one can pass the blame on to somebody else. This can never bring efficiency. At a time when we have to do great things, whether it is the Five Year Plans or others, if nobody takes the responsibility or one takes only a little responsibility the work is bound to be delayed or, may be, not done at all.

A good lot of Government money is of course spent on the various projects like the Sindri Fertilisers, the Iron and Steel Plants or the major river valley projects, and we have to be careful about the expenses. But this aspect of carefulness must not go too far. Mr. Appleby, the American expert who recently came to India, had in his report appreciated our work, but complained that the system we have had was suitable only during the British period when there was not much work to be done. But today when we want to progress in every field, social, industrial or agricultural, the old system does not prove useful.

The report has had its effect but not much. Official files containing notings and references continue to circulate endlessly in various secretariats or departments. Nothing is as harmful as administrative delay. Apart from causing waste of national income and paper, it encourages corruption. We have to put a stop to this delay. There is only one way to do it. You should have a procedure whereby someone should be made responsible for what he has to do. At the most he will make mistakes for which you can take him to task, but he should know that it is his responsibility and none else's. There should be decentralisation in administration.

The world is inclined towards centralisation. In the field of industries the bigger units eat up the smaller ones. This is true of trade also. Centralisation is a product of the machine age. It is impossible to stop it. But unless

we check it, it will be harmful. There are, of course, things that cannot be decentralised, for example, our Integral Coach Factory at Madras. But I am talking of administration.

Centralisation, as I said, is necessary to a certain extent but decentralisation is very essential. When we start decentralising the administration, we come to the panchayat which is the smallest unit. The panchayat, like the co-operatives, should not be too big.

It is essential that the people of a panchayat should know one another and work like a family. If a village is too small, two or three villages can be combined. I do not think that the size of the panchayat should be determined by the resources only. It should be according to the number of people who can work on a co-operative basis.

You are all aware of what is taking place in China. There is a strong Central Government, whose principles are different from our but whose system of work is decentralised. It gives the people the ability to do things. It is essential that we should also enthuse our people so that they can do things. Unless you do it the people will not learn to work.

We have to advance our industry as well as our agriculture. For a country like ours, it is essential to have better agriculture, and the progress in our industry will depend on it. Whether it is industry or agriculture, the most essential thing is to have trained people to run it. This training can come out of practice only. There is some practical work in our technical and agricultural courses, but I feel there should be more of it. There is good practice to be had in administration, but a farmer cannot be sent to the school of administration. He will get training only in the panchayat or the co-operative. I happened to be in a village near Delhi ten days back, and exhorted the people to work for their development through their panchayat, only to be told that there was no panchayat in the village. It is a matter for shame that a panchayat could not be formed even in a village of Delhi. If we think that

we can take a leap, have some trained people at the top and achieve things, we would be sadly mistaken.

We have defined our national objective as the establishment of a socialist co-operative commonwealth. In a socialist co-operative, we cannot impose anything from above. It has to start at the root only, from the village, the village panchayat or the village co-operative.

In connection with the Community Development programmes, some camps were held during the last few months and I had a few occasions to go to them and meet the panches. I found that they were awake, and they had begun to take interest in things. The officials there sat with them, talked with them and met them on an equal footing. We have to try to open the windows of their minds. This cannot be done in the official way. If you talk to them from above, it will have no effect. You have to come down and talk to them on their level.

I am talking to you about this aspect because I have had some experience of it. I am not a kisan. I have never farmed or produced anything nor do I have a single yard of land to do it, but I have my own personal and practical experience and have, I feel, the key to their minds and hearts. I am not indulging in self-praise : I meet them on an equal footing; and I respect their wisdom and their individuality; hence they respond.

This is how you have to work. The official approach is wrong and should be discarded. If an officer pays a flying visit to a village in a big jeep, he does not come in contact with the people. If he goes and sits with them on their charpais, then he can influence them. The curtain or the wall which divides the people from the officers has to be levelled, and this is the only approach that can work.

I am of opinion that the officials, be they big or small, should work in the villages for some days in the year and work with the kisans in their fields. This will add to their health as well as to their experience. I am also of opinion

that everyone in India, every boy and girl, should be conscripted for compulsory social service. There is military conscription in other countries. We do not want military service but we do want military discipline.

I have never been a panch of any panchayat. You know their problems much better, but I can tell you about the approach that you should have. Your approach should be intellectual as well as emotional. You should approach them on a footing of equality, and the larger the amount of responsibility you can entrust to them, the larger would be the gains.

21. TRUST THE PEASANT

Agriculture is of the first importance. The Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission wrote to me the other day and quoted the following passage from the writing of an eminent economist: "The method by which the industrial revolution can be set in motion is by increasing agricultural productivity and then transferring the fruits of that productivity from agriculture to development of industries."

That is a basic thing. Yet, we have not really come to full grips with this. We have not attached adequate importance to agriculture. It is often said that there is a Committee's report on it. It is also a fact that the Agriculture Departments in some States are poorly manned. Agriculture services are also supposed to be secondary services. It shows our mental approach.

We want an industrial revolution in this country. That revolution is based on many factors. One chief factor being agricultural productivity, we come back to agriculture. There is no doubt at all that agricultural productivity can be increased very greatly, rain or no rain. Let us be clear

December, 1958

about it. Of course, rain makes a difference. But we have to increase productivity by other means all over India and we have not done that.

We discuss a hundred things in connection with agriculture. All are good things. We agree about them. Who does not agree that fertilisers, manure, compost, bunding, irrigation, choice of seeds etc. are good things ? These are not points in dispute. We get back to the basic position. We want to get things moving. But there is something wrong or wanting either in our mental approach or in our administrative and organisational approach to this problem.

Perhaps the most important impediment is the fact that we have not been able to get all we should have got out of the people—their enterprise, their throwing themselves into increased production with joy and good heart. In other words, apart from providing good officers, a task of primary importance is to pick up responsible people from amongst the peasants and the agriculturists. Have we done it ? May be, to some extent.

I regret to say that the Community Development movement has only partially succeeded in this respect. Why is it so ? I think that the only way to produce a response is to trust the peasant and give him power and authority to go ahead. The argument is used that he does not know enough. But this is fundamentally a wrong argument. That was the argument the British people used against us. We may provide the peasants technical help and other assistance, but essentially authority and power must be given to the people in the villages. Let them function and let them make a million mistakes. Do not be afraid of such a possibility. Our movement is restricted because we are restricted in our way of thinking. Let us give power to the panchayats.

I have often said that the co-operative is not a co-operative if the official is there. It is against the basic idea of a co-operative that it be allowed to be run by officials. Let it be aided by officials, from a distance. It must not be officialised.

In a village co-operative, the members know each other. They know the good men and the bad men in the village. It is the personal element and knowledge that matters. The moment a large number of people are brought into the picture, the peasant is lost in that and he does not know what he should do. Therefore, the basis of our agricultural approach and every other approach is devolution of authority to the village panchayat and the village co-operative. Otherwise, the peasants will not have the sense of common partnership in doing things.

About ceilings on land, the more I think of it the more I come to the conclusion that while ceilings are essential, ceilings cannot function without co-operatives. Co-operatives are an essential part of it. We must have both together, otherwise something will go wrong.

22. HOUSES BY THE MILLIONS

When you go to the villages you have to face entirely different conditions, and I hope that this Building Council thinks of providing some kind of houses, call them huts or what you like, for the villages far removed from towns, which can be built by the villagers, with local material.

And, here my colleague, Shri Dey's Ministry—Community Development—comes in. We have to build houses, small ones, no doubt, by the 10 millions in order to make a real difference. No Government agency can ever build on such a vast scale. It can help the villagers to build them. And if the Community Development takes it up—in a sense it does—it can be done much more cheaply and expeditiously than otherwise. The people can do it only if your present rules and regulations are simplified very considerably. You cannot rouse the people's enthusiasm and at the same time make them sit on the edge of that

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Inaugural address at the Third Meeting of the National Building Council, February 12, 1959

enthusiasm. With correspondence taking place in a distant office, for months and months, enthusiasm goes and everybody gets disgruntled and annoyed. Some processes and rules have to be laid down so that the people can go ahead with the work as rapidly as possible. In regard to some of our projects—I do not know whether this applies to housing—organisations like the Bharat Sevak Samaj have participated and approached the villagers to do the work. To begin with, the first major programme was executed in Bihar, where the people worked on the Kosi project. In Delhi, in spite of an initial disinclination, the people have progressively justified themselves in this type of work. Here recently, some displaced persons have shifted from the university area to another place. Huts had to be built for them, and the Delhi Corporation, the Bharat Sevak Samaj and others helped in the work. The job was done quickly and efficiently. I do not by any means suggest that the houses put up are models of beauty and efficiency but, considering everything, it is a very satisfactory job. So, we have to explore all these methods of inducing the public to do the work and not remain in the set groove of a Government office issuing tenders and fixing contractors to do the work.

23. SOCIAL WELFARE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Reference has been made in the Chairman's speech to a large number of problems, and I am not very competent to deal with them. But I would like to say one or two things.

One is that I have welcomed the co-ordination of the activities of the Social Welfare Board with the Community Development movement. Both cover nearly the whole of

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Inaugural speech at the Fifth Annual Conference of State Social Welfare Advisory Boards, New Delhi, March 18, 1959

the country, and both have fundamentally the same objective in view, and it would be unfortunate if they pulled in different directions or worked independently of each other. Their activities should be closely co-ordinated, the Social Welfare Board specially looking after the work of social welfare within the larger ideal of Community Development.

We are engaged in building up panchayats, co-operatives, etc. I think that the Social Welfare Board also should, not directly, in some other form, take interest in this work. I say so because the type of social welfare isolated from life's problems, which sets up orphanages—I hate the word —or widows' homes etc. may be all right, but does not appeal to me in the slightest. This is work in odd bits, a few persons chosen to be looked after, because they are helpless. We may have training institutions to give training in such work, but let us drop words like 'orphanages', etc., as if they are badges of a criminal tribe. The child grows up thinking there is nobody to look after it—'I have no parents'. It is a bad thing.

But if you deal with the active problems of life, in the village, in the city, and if the welfare work is connected with that, then you are part of a widespread, broad movement and not odd institutions doing bits of good work. These institutions may be necessary here and there but the approach they represent, if I may say so, is the 'superior' approach of the well-to-do towards the less well-to-do. That may be justified occasionally but I feel that the approach should be to fit the people in with the attempt to solve the problems of the country in a wider way. You work in the villages. You will do well to interest yourselves in the panchayat there and see that women understand it and go into it. It will be difficult to begin with but you will succeed in due course. Or there is the co-operative. Great stress has been laid on service co-operatives. I think that the co-operatives should be a big field for the work of trained women. Take up the training of women for the purpose, and put them into it, and do not let the men in the villages imagine that women can be kept out of it.

24. THE IDEAL OF SERVICE

Having come here, I was eager to visit this establishment, even for a little while, because I have talked a great deal about this with Shri S. K. Dey. He was anxious too that I should come here. He himself appeared to me to attach great importance to this Research Institute, and was rather pleased with the work that is being done here.

Obviously, during a brief visit it is not possible for me to say very much about what you are doing. Nevertheless, it does help me to form some idea of the manner of your working, and that in itself is useful.

I think the form of discussion that you have adopted—that is, your 'syndicates' as they are called, sitting together and discussing each aspect separately and then jointly—is far better than listening to lectures, which is normally done.

In a sense, what we are trying to do in this Community Development movement is nothing frightfully new. Other countries have tried to do it too. In a much more vital sense, however, it is a voyage of exploration on territory which has broad features—of which you are aware, but only of the broad features—and, therefore, it becomes more difficult and more exciting.

It may be said that, of all our various activities in India, probably the most important activity—and potentially the one which will bring the greatest results—is the Community Development movement. Here you are working with the basic material in the country—human beings—and getting them out of various ruts in which they have

Address to the Fifth orientation course at the Central Institute of Study and Research in Community Development, Mussoorie, April 24, 1959

been, and helping them to develop certain mental and bodily attitudes—a certain dynamism—in addition to the particular crafts and training that you might give them, whether in agriculture or in other fields. That is basic, because, in the ultimate analysis, a country's development or position is due to, and can be measured by, the quality of its people. Everything else is secondary. And the quality of the people may be divided broadly into a number of really top-ranking persons that a country has in every department. Whether it is science, engineering, medicine, or administration, it is the top-ranking persons, absolutely the A-1 persons, who give a certain status to a country. But it is not enough to have just top-ranking persons. You have to have a relatively higher grade of the common man, of the mass of people. If you do not have that relatively higher grade, you will not get too many top-ranking people, because it is out of this reservoir that they come. You are not working to produce geniuses, but you are working to produce that huge reservoir of humanity in India, out of which come the higher grades; and we want that reservoir to have the opportunity. It is of the most vital importance.

You are not dealing directly with, let us say, industrial or technical training. Other people do that. But technical and industrial training depends, to a tremendous deal, on the innate ability of the Indian craftsmen. During the last few years, specially during the second World War, circumstances forced the British Government to develop certain Indian industries. The people entertained vague doubts as to how far the Indian worker could be trained in these very fine processes in industry. Surprisingly, they found that the Indian craftsman was extraordinarily adept at them, that is, his hands were adept at the work. It is a question of the feel of hands. Mind's scheme is in the hands; and our craftsmen became expert mechanics. The other day, a high-powered Russian team came to India. They were surprised at the expertness of some of our

technical workers. The feel of their hands told them much, which even very accurate machines could not easily judge. I mentioned this only as an instance of the quality of a people in any direction. The basic quality in human beings is a certain character, a certain strength of character, a certain—if I may use the word—nobility of character—coupled with certain capacities, mental, intellectual, manual, to do things, plus the capacity to work—because idle people will not produce much.

Therefore the Community Development movement is striking at the root cause of rural India's static condition, of our decay in many ways; and the more that is removed, the vast population of India gets on the move. So, I am not interested very much in reports of what has been done somewhere, although physical achievements are important. The real thing one can judge of an individual or a group is how self-reliant that person or group is.

I am very glad that here you are trying to discuss these matters, firstly, between the official group and the non-official—M.L.As.—and, secondly, with men who have had personal contacts with this movement and know something about it. It is only in this frank way that you can uncover your own difficulties or failings. This distinction between the official and non-official—we go on using these phrases which are derived from British times—is ridiculous; the real distinction should be between the serviceman and the non-serviceman. In the process of this working, the official becomes more and more competent the more non-official he becomes; and the non-official becomes more and more competent the more he gets the discipline of the official. There is a difference between what is called the agitational approach—which is useful, because, it is good for public relations too—and a systematic approach, which normally an official might be able to make. So, in effect, this working together should bring the two nearer to each other—the serviceman and the non-serviceman—each learning from the other.

25. A USEFUL METHOD

Yesterday it so happened I was in Mussoorie and I paid a visit to the Research Centre of the Community Development Organisation. I was very much impressed by what I saw at the Centre, where about 50 to 60 persons take a course for five to six weeks at a time, till a fresh batch comes, and each batch contains a number of servicemen and a number of non-servicemen. I found they worked in groups, each group called a syndicate working separately. Each syndicate was discussing a subject heatedly. There were seven syndicates, and the idea was that they discussed the subject for two weeks or so, then they would draw up a report which they would circulate and ultimately they would meet together. Obviously that method seemed to me far better than listening to lectures. It drew people out. It made them think and criticise each other, and thus their consideration of that subject became more and more mature and deeper.

I was rather impressed by this method in a study of a subject like Community Development which is not a static subject, but is a dynamic, growing subject. In a sense Community Development in its various aspects covers a large variety of functions of public administration. Although it does not deal with what might be called the higher ranks of public administration, it does deal with the rural areas, and almost everything in the rural areas comes into touch with Community Development. I feel that more and more attention is needed to be given to the lower ranks of public administration than to the higher ranks. The higher ranks are much more before the public eye, but the lower ranks deal with far more in the life of

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Speech at the Fifth Annual General Meeting of the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, April 25, 1959

the people. I do not know how far this Institute or other institutes think of this aspect, of the lower ranks, like the petty revenue official who is far more important from the point of veiw of the average resident in the villages of India than the high officials.

You may remember the story of an old lady whose son was, I believe, being tried for a very serious offence, may be murder, before the High Court. And when he was acquitted by the judge, the old lady said, 'Thank you, may you rise to be a Kotwal'. For her the Kotwal was a much more important person than the High Court Judge. She had to deal with him daily. And so we have to think of these lower functionaries who make the base.

Great stress has been laid by the Planning Commission, the National Development Council and generally by the Government on panchayats, co-operatives, etc. One aspect of that stress is that they should not be officialised, that they should be controlled by the people of the village who form the members and that the official element should be rather distant, advisory, of course, helpful, but not at all in the sense of bossing over them, and interfering with their functioning. Let them make mistakes. Let us accept that mistakes committed by them are often better than the helplessness and powerlessness which comes from somebody sitting on top of them. They will never grow that way. That is an important emphasis.

26. HARD WORK LIES AHEAD

Progress is possible only through hard work. We shall have to produce wealth through our own efforts and only then our new dream of a prosperous Welfare State for India with a society patterned after the socialist ideal will

From speech delivered at Rajpalayam, Madras, May, 1959

become a reality. Socialism means a large measure of equality and it cannot be attained, as some people think, by distributing equally whatever they have. The first essential of socialism is to have something to distribute, that is to say, to produce enough wealth. If we do not produce more and more from land and industry, then we have nothing really to distribute except our poverty.

Long ago, we dreamt of freedom for India and it had been realised.

Now we dream of work for India, so that we may get rid of poverty and unemployment, and that everyone in the country—man, woman and child—may share in the welfare and opportunities for growth. We dream of a country where there would not be too much difference between the rich and the poor and where, more or less, people would be equal, where there would not be too great caste differences and where people would live together, whatever their religion or caste, and co-operate with each other as fellow citizens of India. This is work for our own good, for the good of the country so that we may work for peace and help in the preservation of peace all over the world. This can come about only when we progress.

We cannot get rid of poverty and unemployment by getting some aid from abroad. Countries which are wealthy today have produced wealth themselves by increasing production. We have to produce ourselves the wealth we need. With a view to augmenting the wealth of the country, we are now putting up big plants, erecting machine and power plants througout the country. Even so, greater production from the land is essential because with the help of the surplus available, we can build up industries, big and small.

This cannot be done by orders of the Government or by laws or by officials but can be done only by the people themselves. Therefore, the Community Development Movement was started seven years ago so that the people in the villages could raise themselves.

I believe the Community Development blocks have generally helped to raise the level of the villagers and have made the people more active and more co-operative. The ideal of co-operation has been introduced in the Community Development Movement, which is nothing but the same idea of working together and becoming self reliant. A strong Panchayat with sufficient powers and a strong co-operative for each village are necessary to look after its civic and economic activities.

The service co-operatives are intended to make the people do things together through their own elected committees. We have said that for the next three years we must spread the service co-operatives and when the people are willing, they should be trained. Afterwards, we would like to have joint farming but only with their agreement. There can be no compulsion, because co-operation is essentially a voluntary effort. Compulsion and co-operation are contradictory terms. Even when there is co-operative farming, the ownership of land rests with the individual and nobody is going to take away that ownership.

I have no doubt that these co-operatives would grow more rapidly in Madras State than elsewhere, and so, I look forward to the rapid march of Madras State in this new programme.

27. A CRUCIAL ROLE

I had greatly looked forward to attending these conferences in Mysore City. Previously I have had occasion to attend conferences of Development Commissioners where problems of Community Development were discussed. I have found these conferences helpful and somewhat differ-

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Message to the Mysore Conference on Community Development and Co-operation, July, 1959

ent from the normal type of conference. There was less speech-making at these conferences and more discussion of specific problems.

I have believed, and have said often, that the Community Development movement in India is of the highest significance. I have called it revolutionary in every sense of the word. I have said so realising its many failings and its lack of success in numerous ways. Nevertheless I believe that, in the nature of things, it is performing a task of revolutionary depth and magnitude, inasmuch as it is endeavouring to change, peacefully and progressively, the social order of the 300 million inhabitants of our rural areas. Those in charge of this movement have thus a heavy responsibility. Each one of them is not merely a cog in a machine, but is a living part of a vital, dynamic process through which we are changing our villages and rural India.

The real change comes, of course, from within the village, from the very people living in the village, and is not imposed from outside. It is a process of self-development and self-reliance. The outsider can only help a little, give some guidance or a push here and there. That little help may, of course, be of the greatest importance or it can light a flame which will shed its light over a very much wider area. But the test of success is how far the people of a village shoulder their own burdens and have developed a spirit of self-reliance and mutual co-operation.

I am also convinced that there should be a growing measure of decentralisation and delegation of authority. There is a danger in this and a risk of things going awry because of lack of experience or training. That risk should be faced cheerfully. In the long run it is only by spreading out responsibility that we will train our people.

I do not propose to refer to the specific problems which the Community Development movement has to face. People who will gather at the Mysore Conference are much more competent to deal with them than I am. There are one or two aspects, however, to which I would like to draw attention.

Many of our failures in the Government have been due partly at least to administrative weaknesses. If we could tighten up our administration in regard to basic matters and strategic points, the results would be appreciable. There is also a tendency for us to spread out too much. Let us concentrate on the major issues.

Probably in the scheme of the Community Development movement, the most important individual is the Block Development Officer. The Development Commissioner and others are, of course, important; so is the Village Level Worker in his field. But it is the Block Development Officer who occupies the most vital position in this great movement. The success of Community Development will, therefore, depend upon the quality of the Block Development Officers. They are, or should be, the salt of the earth. If we build up a high level, competent and enthusiastic body of Block Development Officers all over the country, we have provided the wherewithal for rapid progress. The Block Development Officer must, of course, have competence and enthusiasm. He must have elan. That, in the final analysis, is something which gives quality to an individual and which communicates itself to others.

Ever since the Community Development movement started seven years ago, I have believed in it. I hold that faith still and I am convinced that this will bring great results to our country and, more particularly, to the people who live in our villages. To all those who are working for this great movement and these great ideals, I send my greeting and good wishes. May they succeed in ample measure.

28. DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALISATION—A HISTORIC STEP

We are going to lay the foundations of democracy or panchayati raj in our country. If Mahatma Gandhi were alive today, how happy he would have felt! Rajasthan is the heart of India, historically as well as geographically. The people of this State who come from villages and towns have pledged themselves to take upon their shoulders the heavy responsibilities of democracy and the Government of this State have, by an Act of Legislature, handed over the responsibilities to them. It is a historic task and it would have given great pleasure to Mahatma Gandhi to know that such a historic step was taken on his birthday.

As I look back over the history of India, I find that during this long and chequered period of India's history, many things have happened. So many great events that took place have been recorded in history while others are only enshrined in the hearts of the people. For instance, we celebrate Ram Lila in every nook and corner of India. Dussehra is celebrated throughout the country because it is imprinted in the hearts of people, not on the pages of history. All these events, both recorded as well as unrecorded, have been absorbed in the life of our nation. The ups and downs that we have witnessed, the pains and pleasures that we have gone through, the successes or failures that we have met have all gone to constitute what we call India.

The story of India is very very long and I do not know how many of you have tried to know it. Since our childhood, we have heard and read a good deal about what we are, why we call our country Bharat and why we shout

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Translation of speech in Hindi at Nagore in Rajasthan on the occasion of the inauguration of the programme of democratic decentralisation in the State on October 2, 1959, published in the AICC *Economic Review*

Jai Hind. Our country may be called by different names, Bharat, Hindustan, India, and when we shout the slogan Jai Hind, we mean the same thing. May I ask you what Mother India stands for? Once I enquired of some sturdy peasants of the Punjab, who were shouting Jai Hind at the top of their voices, what Mother India stood for. After a lot of thinking they replied that the soil on which they stood represented Mother India. I again enquired whether the soil alone was Mother India, to which they could not give a clear answer and asked me to explain it. I told them that Mother India did not mean the picture of a long-haired goddess that they had seen here and there. The picture was only a symbol; Mother India really meant all of us who were the part and parcel of this great country. Each one of us was a part of Mother India and all the 400 millions of Indians constituted Mother India as a whole. Even those who have gone before us and the others who will follow were a part of Mother India. In the living present it is we who jointly make our country and, therefore, when we shout Jai Hind, it means so many things.

We should, therefore, be clear in our minds that the people of this country, the present, the past and the future generations, are a part and parcel of this great country. We are engaged in various activities in our homes and on the fields. If we look at it from another angle, we are working today for our future; the past is gone and we are trying to dress Mother India in new clothes. The old clothes that Mother India was wearing were tattered and torn because she was poor. Now we want Mother India to put on a new garb and to live in a beautiful house. We want to get our country all the necessities of life. We want our countrymen to enjoy adequate food and shelter. We want to obtain these things by our efforts, not through charity. We want to raise our country by our own industry and hard work. It is a gigantic task before us so that when our children grow up, they should find themselves in a new India, the India of our dreams, in which there should be no poverty or hunger.

When we became independent we established the rule of the people and every citizen of India was given the right of vote. You elected your representatives to the State Legislatures and to Lok Sabha. In a way it was a step in the right direction but still after electing the people's representatives, real democracy did not come into being. If the big officers consult the people now and then, it does not usher in the rule of the people. India will make real progress only when the people living in villages become politically conscious. More than 80 per cent of the Indian population lives in villages and the progress of the country is bound up with the progress in our villages. Whenever our villages make progress, India will become a strong nation and nobody will be able to stop its onward march.

Seven years ago we started development plans like the Community Projects and the National Extension Service. These by now have covered more than three lakhs of villages and on the whole good work has been done. You must, however, realise that to uplift lakhs of villages is not an ordinary task and we have not been able to do as much as we expected. The reason for the slow progress is our dependence on official machinery. An officer is probably necessary because he is an expert but this work can be done only if the people take up the responsibility in their own hands. Some people thought that if the responsibility was handed over to the people, they would probably not be able to shoulder it but it is only by providing opportunity to the people that they can be trained to handle responsibility. Therefore, it became imperative to take the bold step whereby more and more responsibility could be transferred to the people. They were not merely to be consulted but effective power was to be entrusted to them. Therefore, we decided that in every village there should be a village panchayat with more powers and there should be a co-operative society which should wield sufficient powers.

You must distinguish between the functions of the panchayats and the co-operative unions. The panchayat helps

in the day-to-day administration and the co-operative union manages the economic affairs. In ordinary language a co-operative union means that people should help each other, and we all know that unity is strength. The responsibilities of administration should not be only in the hands of big officials but they should be divided equally among our 400 million people. If we are able to do that, we can acquire great strength. We must have the co-operation of the people and we must do things in consultation with each other. Therefore, we gave due recognition to the role of panchayats and the co-operative unions.

The co-operative unions are of many kinds and it is not necessary that in the whole of India we should have a uniform type of co-operative unions. The functions of a co-operative union should depend upon the needs and conditions of the area in which it is formed. Usually a co-operative society is thought to be an institution that advances loans to the agriculturists. This is a very important role but this is not enough. We want that the co-operative union should take upon itself other jobs like marketing, distribution of fertilisers, seeds and manures and also duties like the sale of agricultural produce. Formerly the farmer had to depend upon the middleman for marketing his produce with the result that all the profits went into the pocket of the village Sahukar and the farmer could not get much benefit. Whenever the farmer needed money, he would sell his yield or his crop at a very low price. We are trying to change that system so that the farmer should enjoy the maximum benefit from his labour. If the agricultural produce is marketed through the co-operative union and the middleman is eliminated, the entire profit will be shared by farmers themselves. A co-operative society can render many other services like providing good quality seeds, better implements and if need be, small tractors. It is meant to perform all those functions which an individual farmer cannot successfully do. It is in this way that a co-operative union can encourage co-operative effort among the farmers and save them from exploitation.

The co-operative unions do not take away the land of the farmer; the land remains his property. They only help in increasing his profits. The money that formerly went into others' pockets is shared by the farmers themselves and thus the farmers can become prosperous. In almost every country of the world, farmers and agriculturists have formed co-operative unions. They not only share the profits among them but they also set up small factories, open schools and run civil and veterinary hospitals. Thus all of them are gainers. Their children get opportunities for education and everyone gets employment. Thus the country as a whole stands to gain.

You must, however, remember that co-operative unions do not start functioning by just collecting a few people together. They have to be trained for the jobs and unless adequate training is given, they cannot run the unions efficiently. We, therefore, made arrangements that proper training be imparted to the people. The village workers and the Block Development Officer were trained in these jobs so that the co-operative unions should be managed by trained personnel.

The co-operative unions can serve in another way. In a country like ours, where there is fragmentation of holdings, with each farmer owning a small piece of land, it would be much better if 20 or 30 farmers join together and start collective farming. This reduces the expenses and increases the profits. Collective farming is, therefore, a very useful thing but it can come about only after some time. It will not affect in any way the ownership of your land, but it will help you in marketing your agricultural products and in other economic matters. I, therefore, believe that if you can have panchayats to help you in administrative matters and co-operative unions in economic matters, our villages can make great progress.

The third important thing that we need in our villages are schools. In the world of today illiterate people cannot make any progress. It would be wrong to suppose that the people who live in villages need no education. Education

is necessary even for a farmer. Every day new opportunities are opening up and it is necessary that every village should have a school so that the villager should be able to receive education. Remember, education should not be confined to men, but women-folk should also get equal opportunities because no country can make progress unless its men as well as women join together in making the country prosperous. Those days are gone when women were confined to the homes and were not allowed to share in any activities that men engaged in. Women should do the duties of the home but that should not be all. They should also serve the country in any way they can. It is only then that our country can make progress. Therefore, the panchayats co-operative unions and schools are the functions of our village life.

We should all remember that wealth can only be produced by our sweat and toil. Our wealth is entirely dependent on our labour. It is the people's money that is spent on education, health, communications and on several other welfare schemes. The First Five Year Plan came to an end and now we are having the Second Five Year Plan. It will come to an end after a year or so. The Third Five Year Plan is in the making and is being discussed at present. Development plans like the Community Development Blocks for the uplift of the villages have great importance. The time has come when the responsibility of running these plans should be entrusted to the people. I shall, therefore, ask you to shoulder these responsibilities with faith and courage. You should increase your income and then spend it upon the welfare of the entire village, and the education of your children. You should know that you have taken upon yourself a heavy responsibility and the people of India are looking towards you. I am fully confident that not only in Rajasthan but in any part of India where responsibility is entrusted to the people, it will yield happy results.

As we sit here, I see the sun going down, and before my eyes flash two pictures—the picture of old Rajasthan,

symbolised in the fort of Amar Singh Rathore and the picture of new Rajasthan represented by the present generation. The old and the new are rubbing shoulders with each other. We are the product of the past but we have to build the future. We must respect the old order but we must remember that we have to build a new India.

Agriculture is the foundation of our nation's life today. We have to undertake many projects but the success of all our projects depends upon our agriculture. As long as we do not acquire self-sufficiency in food, we cannot march ahead. If we import food from outside, all our money will be drained away and we will become poorer day by day. At the same time we need money for setting up our heavy industries and for other projects. Therefore, our primary need is to increase our agricultural produce. It is in this context that I stress the need of co-operative unions. The land of Rajasthan is very fertile. Many of you might be coming from Suratgarh near Ganga Nagar. Sometime back it was a barren area but now it is being irrigated by Bhakra and it has yielded a bumper crop. All these things can only be achieved if people work hard.

I, therefore, repeat that you have taken a historic step on an auspicious day and I congratulate you and offer my blessings. But who am I to offer congratulations and blessings? We are all participants in a joint enterprise. It is good that we should encourage each other but the real joy lies in our success. It is only when our efforts begin to bear fruit that we get real pleasure. You may undertake any enterprise and if you take it to a successful conclusion by your courage and hard work, it gives us strength and makes the whole nation strong. We fought for our independence, and when we attained it, we felt a new strength within us. The world began to respect us and our efforts bore fruit. We framed the First Five Year Plan and we carried it through successfully. That gave us self-confidence. You should also try to make your panchayats a success. You should try to run the

co-operative unions with strength and courage, and you will see that the life of the people of Rajasthan will be transformed. As your conditions improve, you will gain more strength and greater self-confidence. You will be able to raise your head high with pride and you will make rapid progress. My best wishes are always with you and I am confident that step by step the people of Rajasthan will march towards their goal.

We have so far succeeded and moved step by step. You have seen that gradually and steadily our strength is increasing. Now when the responsibilities have been entrusted to the people, it will increase still more. Formerly the Rajas and their subjects were divided into water-tight compartments but now that distinction between the rulers and the ruled has been obliterated. In olden times when a king was installed on the throne, he did not become wise overnight. Similarly, you should not think that by gaining an official position you will become superior to others.

Sometimes our officers begin to consider themselves as masters. I hope that your presidents and sarpanches will not work in that way. It is obvious that only a person who can work efficiently is given the responsibility. The others will not be able to function efficiently. If, however, an officer becomes very proud and wants to employ bureaucratic methods, he will not be able to win the co-operation of the people. A good officer, therefore, works in a spirit of equality. It is only then that he can impart training to others. You should also move along those lines and work in mutual co-operation. All the people like village workers and Block Development Officers associated with your panchayats or block development projects should consider themselves as the members of one fraternity. There should not be any distinction between the high and the low because the days of the rulers and the ruled are gone. The caste distinction amongst us should also disappear. In the India of today nobody should consider himself superior to the others. In political life

everyone has an equal vote; in economic matters everyone has equal opportunities; in our panchayats also everyone should be considered as equal, whether he is a man or a woman, high or low. We are all children of one country. To whatever religion we might subscribe we should all live like brethren. We may follow our own religions but we should respect other religions also. It is in such a spirit of unity and brotherhood that we have to march ahead, with courage in our work and faith in ourselves.

You should remember that the world is watching you at every step. If you flinch from your determination and get caught up in mutual quarrels and party factions, you will not be able to succeed in your mission and you will expose yourself to ridicule. When we undertake a big enterprise, we ourselves become big. We should not act like small men. Therefore, all of you, the panches, sarpanches, presidents and other eminent persons who have gathered here have taken upon yourselves a heavy responsibility. You have to awaken the masses of Rajasthan and it will be a great step. You should. therefore, guard yourself against adopting a wrong course so that you should not bring a bad name to yourself, to your panchayats or to your State. You have to rise above petty things and set a noble example. If you do so, you will find peace and strength of mind and you will make tremendous progress. The future generations will be able to say with pride that you laid the solid foundations of democracy in Rajasthan.

29. MOVING FORWARD

You have no doubt listened to my colleague, the Minister for Community Development and Co-operation, with great interest. For the last many years he has lived wrapped in subjects having a bearing on Community Development and Co-operation and has given all his time and energy to them either at headquarters, or from all over India.

He has given us some kind of a survey of the past eight years. Looking back over this period, it is inevitable that you will find many good and promising points, as also depressing things, as for example, the people not coming up to our expectations.

It is rather a truism to say that we are passing through a transitional age. Every age is transitional. Nevertheless, sometimes this process of transition works more rapidly and the pace and tempo of change are greater. The tempo of change is conditioned by many factors, some of which you can weigh and measure, and some of which are imponderable. Sometimes a country receives a special kind of dose which puts new life into it. We then witness a high level of activity.

I have been impressed by the Community Development movement, because I thought that it was a right approach and that it was working on right lines. But I have been angry with many things that it did, or rather did not do. I have been angry at its expansion on a big scale, more offices being opened and more officials, more jeeps, etc. Officials are good, even though official apparatus is seldom good. It is not a question of individuals. It is rather a question of the mental approach to the problem. You can

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Address at the Meeting of the State Ministers of Community Development, New Delhi, December 9, 1960.

judge human history, or the growth of man, in many ways. Perhaps, the most effective way of judging it is to see what tools a person is using. Benjamin Franklin of America said, "Man is a tool-making animal". The great difference between man and other animals is that he makes his own tools. The tool is the extension to the hand of the brain. If you do not extend it and remain limited, then you remain limited.

To put this differently, we in India have been, and still largely are traditional in thought, in methods of social organisation, and in methods of working in different occupations. Naturally, not all the time. For, if it were quite unprogressive, the social structure would have been dead and gone. If a society does not grow and does not change with changing conditions, it becomes weaker and weaker and loses hold on life. The big problem before us is how to get out of this traditional mould into the modern age. The feeling of change has to come to the hundreds of millions in this country. The basic thing is the mind of India, the mind of hundreds of millions of the people in India coming out of the rut in which it has been. That is the basic approach for Community Development work. It is in this way that we should conceive of the socialistic pattern of society. For India there is no choice except going towards the socialistic structure. The alternative is stagnation and ultimate death.

The tendency of modern scientific age is to centralise. Big industry or agriculture in advanced countries inevitably tends towards centralisation. You cannot advance without a measure of centralisation. I am all for centralisation in some spheres. While you cannot do without centralisation, it is also true that you cannot do away with decentralisation either. You have to balance the two. I want decentralisation, as far as possible, because in the ultimate analysis we want the development of human beings, of their spirit of self-reliance. It is this background which leads me to like the original approach of the Community Development movement.

An official, if I may say so, should gradually forget functioning as an official. He may remain an official, but he must not function in an official way. If the Gram Sevak considers himself a big boss in his little area, I would say he is working in a totally wrong way. You have to fight such tendencies which encroach upon us all the time. That is why I think the Community Development movement began, as it has done, to lose its flavour, to lose its glamour to lose its colour; and it has become a pale replica of officialdom doing good in the way officials do good.

Therefore, comes the panchayati raj. Its theory, of course, is fascinating. But in practice also, in so far as we have seen it in Rajasthan, Andhra and Madras, the way it is bringing about basic changes is quite fascinating. Even the official is changing, or trying to change. The village people, of course, are changing. I think it is, in a sense, the most revolutionary thing that is happening in India. One may say that it will not succeed in the measure we want it to succeed. Behind it, however, are hidden forces which, once released, will make a tremendous difference to the progress of India—rural India in every way, and even industrial India, in regard to small industries and co-operatives etc. It will help to change structure of our social fabric. I think the panchayati raj is of outstanding importance. The Ministers, who are responsible for this in the States should feel that they are in charge of the most vital subject in India.

A society changes as a result of the methods of production. The Indian farmer will change, not because of the fertiliser that he is using, but because of the plough he uses. You cannot expect anything of a person who is using a plough which is a thousand years old. It amazes me that, even after 12 years of independence, there should be millions of these old ploughs in use in India. Even at some loss I should make a bonfire of them to induce the people to feel that it means the discontinuance of old things. The new plough is not frightfully expensive. It will cost 50, 60 or 70 rupees. A State Government should not wait

for some private party to make ploughs and sell them in the market. It is up to the State Governments to manufacture ploughs in every district and to sell them to the people, or to give them on credit, and realise the value after the harvest.

The amount of money that we have been spending is colossal. Everybody thinks that money solves everything. But this is not correct. Countries with little advantage were making good because of hard work and hard application. We, too, should work hard and not wait for every other person to do things for us. If you want to succeed in moving hundreds of millions of people, you must put in hard work. You also need the right mental approach to the problems. The panchayati raj and Community Development movement should be keyed up to food production, because out of food production will come other things.

Essentially, therefore, what we require is a change in our people's thinking. I am quite convinced that the average peasant in India is a practical man, a hard-working man. And it is easier for him to come out of the old rut than for many an educated person in India. But the peasant will not get out of the old rut easily. If, however, he sees a thing done, he would come out. It is the person with a closed mind who is more traditionalist than the peasant.

Looking around India, whether it is in the sphere of industry or of agriculture, I think the picture is a very stimulating one. At any rate, I am stimulated by it. I am convinced that we are making good and that we will make good at a faster rate. This is so not because of India's greatness but because we, and the circumstances, have helped to release forces which cannot be stopped.

The point at issue is how far we can accelerate and ease that process of moving forward. Those who are in authority in the States and at the Centre are naturally to bear the burden a little more than others. And it is from that point of view that I should like all of you to consider this

basic problem which, in the final analysis, is one of changing the 300 million people of India, their ways of thinking and of co-operating with each other. It is the problem of building a new society in India, a new social and economic structure. You in the States, and at the Centre, are partly in charge of it. I wish you well with your job.

30. PANCHAYATS PLUS ELECTRIC POWER

Some of you may remember what Lenin said once in the early days of the Soviet revolution. He said communism is Soviets plus electricity. I am prepared to accept that for India saying—not communism—but progress is panchayats plus electric power—a slight variation of the theme. Electricity is the main thing. Electric power means the motive force for changing things, for modernising things, for modern industry, modern agriculture; and the panchayat is the panchayat, whether small panchayat or big panchayat, which is Parliament; panchayats plus electric power will change India.

31. PROGRESS THROUGH PANCHAYATI RAJ

The establishment of panchayati raj in some States and the promise that it will be extended to the other States is an event of revolutionary significance. The transfer of authority and of developmental work to the panchayat samitis is likely to change the whole background in our rural areas and make the people there more self-reliant and conscious of their responsibilities. There may be some difficulties in the beginning, but I am sure that the step is in the right direction and will yield fruitful results.

From reply in Lok Sabha to debate on the President's Address, February 23, 1961

Message on the establishment of Panchayati Raj, April 22, 1961

To the pradhans, sarpanches, etc., who have been elected and on whom this new and great responsibility is cast, I send my congratulations and good wishes. They are active and responsible partners now in the great task of building up our villages and putting a new life in our rural areas. The growth and intensification of agriculture must necessarily be their first concern, as the prosperity of our rural areas depends upon this. But they have to do much more; they have to help organising multi-purpose co-operatives and encourage the building up of small industries as well as village industries.

The face of rural India is changing. It is getting out of the old ruts and is gradually assuming the beginnings of a modern look. This process of change has to be expedited. We have to use better tools for our agriculture, better seeds, better manures and fertiliser and learn the new methods of increasing our production. Above all, there has to be a sense of co-operative effort, and the petty quarrels and group conflicts, that sometimes afflict our village life, must cease.

Our Service officers must realise that this is a major change and they must not only adopt themselves to it fully, but do so with a spirit of enthusiasm and service of our village people. An essential element of this growth must be the spread of education everywhere. Every boy and girl will have to be provided school education and the bright students should have every opportunity for higher education, technical or other.

It is necessary for Members of Parliament as well as Members of State Assemblies to develop close contacts with the panchayat samitis in their constituencies and get to know the pradhans. The panchayat samitis, on their part, should cultivate and utilise the services of Members of Parliament and of the State Assemblies who represent them. In this way, we shall build up an integrated and co-operative structure which will form the basis of all future progress and make our democratic structure unbreakable.

I hope that during this off-session period, Members of Parliament will especially undertake this work in their constituencies.

32. A MIGHTY EXPERIMENT

Panchayati raj is a mighty experiment. It might not succeed in every part of India, but the conception is a tremendous one. It is succeeding somewhere and it will succeed in the major part of India. You can pick out here and there and say that it has not succeeded. Some panches might have misbehaved as anybody has misbehaved. I would beg of the House to consider the entire background, this enormous country with an enormous population on the move, in a certain direction which I think is the right direction. Many people stumble and fall. Many people make mistakes. Many people betray the objective we aim at. All this is happening, and yet the whole trend is forward and in the right direction.

What we are rather worried about is the pace of change, because there are certain trends here in India and many trends in the world which may create difficulties for us unless the pace is faster. That is a serious problem. I do not think there are many people who challenge the whole trend of India at the present moment. They may criticise many aspects of it, many failures. In fact I would say that the main thing we have to look after is not so much the different policies—we have laid down policies—but the implementation of those policies. For, there is the danger of our thinking that when we lay down a policy, it will automatically be implemented. Laying down high policies is not adequate. That is an important thing, of course, but the more important thing is their implementation, keeping the pace fast enough.

From speech in Rajya Sabha during debate on President's Address, March 15, 1962

33. TRAINING FOR DEMOCRACY

I am at a stage when I am full of enthusiasm for panchayati raj. I do feel that it is something basic and revolutionary in the context of India to establish it in the 5,00,000 or more villages of India. It excites my imagination to think of this vast network of democratic, representative institutions working right at the ground level from the villages upwards. Democracy is not merely Parliament at the top or Legislatures in the States but something which excites every person and which trains everyone to take his proper place and indeed any place in the country, if need arises. I have said, and have meant it, that Panchayati raj is ultimately meant to train every individual in India to be a potential Prime Minister. I know everyone cannot be Prime Minister, but I am sure that vast numbers of people can be trained up for service of the country.

When we talked of panchayati raj many people were rather doubtful about the capacity of our people to shoulder this burden. I was certain they would make mistakes. Nevertheless, I knew we shall get over this difficulty and gradually develop the system of self-government at every stage. There can be no half-way house in this vital matter. Either you trust the people or you do not. Trusting them partly takes you nowhere, because it does not give them real responsibility and they do not develop properly. Having given this authority and power to them, you should not tamper with it by official interference. Let them make mistakes and let them suffer for those mistakes. The officials must only be advisers; they must not be bosses. I believe this question has been considered by you in various ways, about MPs and MLAs being members of panchayat

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Extracts from address to the Annual Conference of State Ministers of Community Development and Panchayati Raj, New Delhi, August 3, 1962

samitis and zila parishads. I think they should be members, but whether they should be members with voting rights or not is another matter. For, the chances are that the MPs and MLAs, having great experience and being better known personalities, will probably boss over the zila parishads and the panchayat samitis. I want to avoid that. I want the people to feel their best themselves. I want to create the psychological atmosphere which makes them feel that they are masters of their household, that they can decide, and that they can make mistakes and suffer for the mistakes. If somebody else, the official or the MP, interferes too much, then the responsibility is cast on him—the responsibility for a decision as well as the consequences of the decision. No doubt, it is essential that our officials, who are experts in their job, should advise them and should help them in every way, but not as bosses. They must behave not as superior persons doling out advice to inferiors but as equals and even, if you like, a little humbly before the ordinary, ignorant peasant and panches. I feel it is important to make the people feel that they are responsible and they have got to decide, and to unconsciously influence them but not consciously direct them. To an extent that principle applies to MPs and MLAs, who should fully participate and give their advice but must not lessen the sense of responsibility of panchayat samitis or zila parishads.

In spite of the criticisms I have heard about Community Development and panchayati raj, I have always felt excited about the work. It is a type of work which has something exciting about it. I do not know how many people are affected by it, 350 million or 300 million of the rural people. It is an exciting thing to raise this vast number of human beings with their co-operation and it is more exciting to make them shoulder the burden themselves in a real way instead of doling out some help. And panchayati raj and the co-operative movement are the way to make them shoulder the burden. In the process of doing that they are growing themselves and probably solving many of the problems that trouble us today. So I hope, now that you are entering the second decade of this movement, you will

do so with a sense of excitement, full of energy, and by the time we reach the third decade you will have established panchayati raj fully and satisfactorily all over India.

34. VILLAGE VOLUNTEER FORCE

We started many years ago the Community Development programme. This scheme has now spread almost to all our villages. It woke up rural India, and the people there began to stir. Much good was done by this programme. But it also showed our failings.

Another great step was then taken by the establishment of panchayati raj to give the people of the villages a large amount of control of their own affairs. The panchayats got the power and the resources, instead of their being controlled by big officers. Panchayati raj has now been established in most of the States of India. The remaining States will establish it soon.

Side by side with the panchayati raj, there is the movement for co-operation, that is, sahkari samaj. This is meant to democratise our economy and to provide economic support to the vast mass of our people. Panchayati raj and sahkari samaj will not only bring political democracy but also economic democracy to the village and will make the people self-reliant and strong.

During the last three or four months we have had to face a great crisis, because our neighbour, China, has attacked us and invaded our territory. Our people all over India in the villages and towns, have faced this challenge bravely, because it is a challenge not only to our freedom but also to our well-being, our culture and our ideal of a democratic life. We have before us a great struggle. Whether the fighting on our frontier goes on or not, this

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Broadcast from All India Radio, Delhi, inaugurating the Village Volunteer Force, January 26, 1963

struggle is with us. We have all to do our utmost to help in this struggle.

Our Five Year Plan aimed at the development of our country and our people. It is now to be so fashioned as to be especially helpful in the defence of our country. But this will not mean that we will cut down our development schemes, for that will weaken us and will be bad for our people. We have, therefore, to bear this double burden of defence and development. I am sure we shall all do so and come out of this struggle triumphant.

What are our villages and the mighty rural population that lives there to do in these circumstances ? Rural India feeds our nation, including the Army and the other defence forces. It provides strength to our nation. It gives us our brave soldiers. Rural India, therefore, must organise itself for this great effort.

We have now decided to have in every village a Village Volunteer Force which will devote itself to this great task. Every able-bodied adult in the five and a half lakh villages of India should constitute himself a volunteer to serve his village and the nation.

The Volunteer Force in every village will have three tasks : more production, education and defence.

Defence is not only the work of our brave soldiers at the front, but it means increasing our production greatly. In order to do this, we have to use new methods in agriculture which will increase our production. We must have minor irrigation works, field channels, soil conservation and dry farming. This will create community assets in the village, which will raise the standards of the people there and give them a recurring source of revenue for the panchayats for development. We should grow not only cereals but also vegetables and fruit.

Education is very important. The Village Volunteer Force will help in educating others and will also take up the work of giving correct information and better under-

standing of our great struggle. The radio and other methods will be used for this purpose. It is important that all people should know what is going on in the country and especially in our struggle for freedom and economic development.

The Village Volunteer Force will look after village defence. They will look after railways, roads, posts and telegraphs, and they will help in keeping law and order in the village.

Labour creates money. Trained labour creates more resources. Each village must have a plan of development which will assure the needs of life to every family. We want to have Defence Labour Banks all over India. If everyone contributes a minimum of twelve days' labour per year to this bank, this will be of great benefit to the village and to the country. Thus, if twenty crore adults in the rural sector work in this way, they will produce assets of three hundred crores of rupees a year for themselves.

In every village people must look after those who require help. Children must be looked after especially as also others who may be without work or are disabled. Every village must take pride in the fact that everyone there is looked after properly. We must consider the village as a big family where each person helps the others. In this way the whole country can be considered a large family of which people of all religions who live here are members.

Thus, we shall build up happy and prosperous villages, and every fellow countryman of ours will be cared for and will add to the wealth of the villages and the country. We have to preserve our freedom and people's raj and make this a large co-operative enterprise.

You will take a pledge today in all your villages to preserve our freedom from any aggressor or invader, and to work for the betterment of all our people. Thus, we shall serve our dear country as well as our villages and

all our people, and make India a happy place for all her children. Let us, therefore, take this pledge, understanding its full meaning, and live up to it. We shall then be worthy sons of our great Bharat Mata.

"I have said it often and I repeat it here that in the implementation of the Five Year Plan, our approach must be to produce a sensation of partnership with the man in the village. The Five Year Plan of India is a people's plan, and in its implementation a feeling should be generated among the people so that each man, woman and child in India became as it were, a partner in 'India Ltd.', jointly engaged in the great task of building a new India

"The basic test of an officer of new India should be whether he can draw out the co-operation of the people. If the official who is in charge cannot do that, it does not matter how clever or able he is : he is just not suitable for the task."

—*Jawaharlal Nehru*

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L205DPD—62—(Sec. IV)—GIPF.

C.D. 173

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India, Delhi-6